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(54) Skin-core high thermal bond strength fiber on melt spin system

Kern-Mantel-Faser mit hoher thermischer Haftfestigkeit in einem Schmelzspinnsystem

Fibre âme-gaine avec haute force de liaison thermique dans un système de filage au fondu

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DescriptionBACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION5 1. Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention relates to synthetic fibers, especially synthetic fibers used in the manufacture of nonwoven fabrics. In particular, the present invention relates to processes and apparatus for the production of polymer fibers and filaments. More specifically, the present invention relates to skin-core fibers produced using melt spin processes, 10 including short spin and long spin processes, and to articles incorporating these skin-core fibers.

2. Background Information

[0002] The production of polymer fibers and filaments usually involves the use of a mix of a single polymer with nominal amounts of stabilizers and pigments. The mix is melt extruded into fibers and fibrous products using conventional commercial processes. Non-woven fabrics are typically made by making a web of the fibers, and then thermally bonding the fibers together where they meet. More specifically, staple fibers are converted into non-woven fabrics using, for example, a carding machine, and the carded fabric is thermally bonded. The thermal bonding can be achieved using various heating techniques, including heating with heated rollers and heating through the use of ultrasonic welding.

20 [0003] Conventional thermally bonded non-woven fabrics exhibit good loft and softness properties, but less than optimal cross-directional strength, and less than optimal cross-directional strength in combination with high elongation. The strength of the thermally bonded non-woven fabrics depends upon the orientation of the fibers and the inherent strength of the bond points.

25 [0004] Over the years, improvements have been made in fibers which provide stronger bond strengths. However, further improvements are needed to provide even higher fabric strengths to permit use of these fabrics in today's high speed converting processes for hygiene products, such as diapers and other types of incontinence products. In particular, there is a need for a thermally bondable fiber and a resulting nonwoven fabric that possess high cross-directional strength and high elongation.

30 [0005] Further, there is a need to produce thermally bondable fibers that can achieve superior cross-directional strength, elongation and toughness properties in combination with fabric uniformity and loftiness. In particular, there is a need to obtain fibers that can produce carded, calendered fabrics with cross-directional properties on the order of at least 650 g/in, (12.5 N/5 cm) with an elongation of 140-180%, and a toughness of 480-700 g/in (9 - 13.5 N/5 cm) for a 20 g/yd² (24 g/m²) fabric bonded at speeds as high as 500 ft/min (152 m/min) or more.

35 [0006] A number of patent applications have been filed by the present assignee which are directed to improvements in polymer degradation, spin and quench steps, and extrusion compositions that enable the production of fibers having an improved ability to thermally bond accompanied by the ability to produce non-woven fabric having increased strength, elongation, toughness and integrity. For example, Kozulla U.S. Patents No. 5,281,378, issued January 25, 1994, No. 5,318,735, issued June 7, 1994 and No. 5,431,994, issued July 11, 1995, and EP-A-445,536 are directed to processes for preparing polypropylene containing fibers by extruding polypropylene containing material having a molecular weight distribution of at least about 5.5 to form hot extrudate having a surface, with quenching of the hot extrudate in an oxygen containing atmosphere being controlled so as to effect oxidative chain scission degradation of the surface. For example, the quenching of the hot extrudate in an oxygen containing atmosphere can be controlled so as to maintain the temperature of the hot extrudate above about 250°C for a period of time to obtain oxidative chain scission degradation of the surface.

45 [0007] By controlling the quenching to obtain oxidative chain scission degradation of the surface, the resulting fiber essentially contains a plurality of zones, defined by different characteristics including differences in melt flow rate, molecular weight, melting point, birefringence, orientation and crystallinity. In particular, as disclosed in these applications, the fiber produced by the delayed quench process includes an inner zone identified by a substantial lack of oxidative polymeric degradation, an outer zone of a high concentration of oxidative chain scission degraded polymeric material, and an intermediate zone identified by an inside-to-outside increase in the amount of oxidative chain scission polymeric degradation. In other words, the quenching of the hot extrudate in an oxygen containing atmosphere can be controlled so as to obtain a fiber having a decreasing weight average molecular weight towards the surface of the fiber, and an increasing melt flow rate towards the surface of the fiber. For example, the fiber comprises an inner zone having a weight average molecular weight of about 100,000 to 450,000 grams/mole, an outer zone, including the surface of the fiber, having a weight average molecular weight of less than about 10,000 grams/mole, and an intermediate zone positioned between the inner zone and the outer zone having a weight average molecular weight and melt flow rate intermediate the inner zone and the outer zone. Moreover, the inner, core zone has a melting point and orientation that is higher than the outer surface zone.

[0008] Further, U.S. Patent No. 5,629,080, issued May 13, 1997 to Gupta et al. and EP-A-552,013 are directed to processes for spinning polypropylene fibers, and the resulting fibers and products made from such fiber processes of these Gupta et al. patent specifications include melt spinning a polypropylene composition having a broad molecular weight distribution through a spinnerette to form molten fibers, and quenching the molten fibers to obtain thermally bondable polypropylene fibers. The processes of the Gupta et al. applications can be used in both a two step "long spin" process, as well as in a one step "short spin" process. According to certain aspects of the invention disclosed in the Gupta et al. patent specifications substantially constant characteristics are maintained within the material forming the fiber, such as rheological polydispersity index and melt flow rate, as the material is extruded, quenched and drawn, and a substantially uniform fiber is obtained.

[0009] More specifically, with regard to known processes for making staple fiber, these processes include the older two-step "long spin" process and the newer one-step "short spin" process. The long spin process involves first melt-extruding fibers at typical spinning speeds of 500 to 3000 meters per minute, and more usually depending on the polymer to be spun from 500 to 1500 meters per minute. Additionally, in a second step usually run at 100 to 250 meters per minute, these fibers are drawn, crimped, and cut into staple fiber. The one-step short spin process involves conversion from polymer to staple fibers in a single step where typical spinning speeds are in the range of 50 to 200 meters per minute. The productivity of the one-step process is increased with the use of about 5 to 20 times the number of capillaries in the spinnerette compared to that typically used in the long spin process. For example, spinnerettes for a typical commercial "long spin" process would include approximately 50-4,000, preferably approximately 3,000-3,500 capillaries, and spinnerettes for a typical commercial "short spin" process would include approximately 500 to 100,000 capillaries preferably, about 30,000-70,000 capillaries. Typical temperatures for extrusion of the spin melt in these processes are about 250-325°C. Moreover, for processes wherein bicomponent filaments are being produced, the numbers of capillaries refers to the number of filaments being extruded, and usually not the number of capillaries in the spinnerette.

[0010] The short spin process for manufacture of polypropylene fiber is significantly different from the conventional long spin process in terms of the quenching conditions needed for spin continuity. In the short spin process, with high hole density spinnerettes spinning around 100 meters/minute, quench air velocity is required in the range of about 3,000-8,000 ft/minute (900 - 2500 m/min) to complete fiber quenching within one inch (25.4 mm) below the spinnerette face. To the contrary, in the long spin process, with spinning speeds of about 1000-1500 meters/minute, a lower quench air velocity in the range of 300 to 500 ft./minute (90 -160 m/min) is used. Therefore, achieving a skin-core type fiber, such as that disclosed in the above-identified Kozulla applications (which controls quenching to achieve a delayed quenching) is difficult in a short spin process due to the high quench air velocity needed for the short spin process.

[0011] Apparatus and methods are also known for melt spinning of polymers to obtain certain advantages in the spinning process. For example, U.S. Patent No. 3,354,250 to Killoran et al. (Killoran) is directed to extrusion method and apparatus wherein contact of molten or plastic material with moving parts is avoided and the residence time of the polymer in the molten condition is kept to a minimum. Specifically, in the extrusion system of Killoran, the splined barrel is cooled, rather than heated, by a surrounding water-cooling jacket which carries away heat, so as to maintain the screw, barrel and powder at a temperature below the melting point of the lowest melting additive.

[0012] In describing the processing of polypropylene, Killoran teaches that the softening temperature of polypropylene is within the range from 168°C to 170°C, and at this temperature the material becomes semi-plastic and sticky. Killoran further teaches that the temperature required for filtering and extrusion of polypropylene may be as high as 280°C, so that the temperature of the polypropylene is increased during the passage through perforations in the block from approximately 170°C to 270°C, or 280°C, that is, there is about 100°C rise from the initial softening at the entrance to the block to the molten condition at the outlet of the block. Therefore, the teachings of Killoran are limited to heating of the polymer from a solid condition to a molten condition to achieve a reduced amount of time that the polymer is in a molten condition, as well as to the prevent polymer in the molten condition from contacting moving elements.

[0013] Further, U.S. Patent No. 3,437,725 to Pierce is directed to the melt-spinning of synthetic polymers, including polypropylene. According to the invention of Pierce, the spinnerette is designed so as to enable the use of polymers having higher melt viscosities, either from high molecular weight polymers or from polymers with stiff chain structures. Specifically, the spinnerette of Pierce is designed so as to permit the spinning of polymer having a high melt viscosity without degrading the polymer. To accomplish this lack of degradation of the polymer, Pierce passes the molten polymer through the filter holder at an initial temperature within a temperature range below that at which significant polymer degradation will occur, passes the polymer into a plurality of passages, each of which leads to a different spinning capillary in the spinnerette plate and has an entrance temperature within the initial temperature range, heats the spinnerette plate to increase the temperature along the passages from the temperature at the entrance to a temperature at least 60°C higher at the spinning capillary, and extrudes the polymer from the spinning capillary after a maximum of 4 seconds of travel through the heated passage. The quenching of Pierce is performed using inert gas and the process is accomplished using a long spin, two step process wherein the filaments are initially spun, and subsequently drawn.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0014] It is an object of the present invention to obtain skin-core filaments or fibers using melt spin processes. It is also an object of the present invention to enable control of the skin-core structure of the fibers or filaments, whereby a skin-core structure can be obtained which possesses either a gradient or a distinct step between the core and the surface of the fiber.

[0015] The objects of the present invention can be obtained by providing a process for spinning polymer filaments, comprising feeding a polymer composition to at least one spinnerette; heating the polymer composition at a location at or adjacent to the at least one spinnerette so as to heat the polymer composition to a sufficient temperature to obtain a skin-core filament structure upon quenching in an oxidative atmosphere; extruding the heated polymer composition through the at least one spinnerette to form molten filaments; and immediately quenching the molten filaments in an oxidative atmosphere, as the molten filaments are extruded, to effect oxidative chain scission degradation of at least a surface of the molten filaments to obtain filaments having a skin-core structure.

[0016] The objects of the present invention are also achieved by providing a process for spinning polymer filaments, comprising feeding a polymer composition to at least one spinnerette; heating the polymer composition at a location at or adjacent to the at least one spinnerette so as to obtain sufficient heating of the polymer composition to partially degrade the polymer composition in a vicinity of the at least one spinnerette; extruding the partially degraded polymer composition through the at least one spinnerette to form molten filaments; and immediately quenching the molten filaments in an oxidative atmosphere, as the molten filaments are extruded, to effect oxidative chain scission degradation of at least a surface of the molten filaments to obtain filaments having a skin-core structure.

[0017] In another embodiment of the invention, the objects of the present invention are obtained by providing a process for spinning polymer filaments, comprising feeding a polymer composition to at least one spinnerette; heating the at least one spinnerette to a temperature of at least about 230°C; extruding the heated polymer composition through the at least one spinnerette to form molten filaments; and immediately quenching the molten filaments in an oxidative atmosphere, as the molten filaments are extruded, to effect oxidative chain scission degradation of at least a surface of the molten filaments to obtain filaments having a skin-core structure.

[0018] In still another embodiment of the invention, the objects of the present invention are obtained by providing a process for spinning polymer filaments, comprising feeding a polymer composition to at least one spinnerette; heating at least one apertured element positioned upstream of the at least one spinnerette to a temperature of at least about 250°C; extruding the heated polymer composition through the at least one apertured element and the at least one spinnerette to form molten filaments; and immediately quenching the molten filaments in an oxidative atmosphere, as the molten filaments are extruded, to effect oxidative chain scission degradation of at least a surface of the molten filaments to obtain filaments having a skin-core structure.

[0019] The objects of the present invention are also obtainable by providing apparatus for spinning polymer filaments, and, in particular, apparatus for performing the processes of the present invention.

[0020] Therefore, according to one embodiment of the present invention, apparatus is provided for spinning polymer filaments, comprising at least one spinnerette; means for feeding a polymer composition through the at least one spinnerette to extrude molten filaments; means for heating the polymer composition at a location at or adjacent to the at least one spinnerette to obtain sufficient heating of the polymer composition to obtain a skin-core filament structure upon quenching in an oxidative atmosphere; and means for immediately quenching molten filaments of extruded polymer in an oxidative atmosphere, as the molten filaments exit the at least one spinnerette, to effect oxidative chain scission degradation of at least a surface of the molten filaments to obtain filaments having a skin-core structure.

[0021] In another embodiment of the apparatus of the present invention, the apparatus for spinning polymer filaments comprises at least one spinnerette; means for feeding a polymer composition through the at least one spinnerette to extrude molten filaments; means for substantially uniformly heating the polymer composition at a location at or adjacent to the at least one spinnerette so as to obtain sufficient heating of the polymer composition to partially degrade the polymer composition in a vicinity of the at least one spinnerette; and means for immediately quenching molten filaments of extruded polymer in an oxidative atmosphere, as the molten filaments exit the at least one spinnerette, so as to effect oxidative chain scission degradation of at least a surface of the molten filaments.

[0022] In still another embodiment of the apparatus of the present invention, the apparatus for spinning polymer filaments comprises at least one spinnerette; means for feeding a polymer composition through the at least one spinnerette to extrude molten filaments; means for substantially uniformly heating the at least one spinnerette to a temperature of at least about 230°C; and means for quenching molten filaments of extruded polymer in an oxidative atmosphere, as the molten filaments exit the at least one spinnerette, to effect oxidative chain scission degradation of at least a surface of the molten filaments to obtain filaments having a skin-core structure.

[0023] In still another embodiment of the apparatus of the present invention, the apparatus for spinning polymer filaments comprises at least one spinnerette; means for feeding a polymer composition through the at least one spinnerette to extrude molten filaments; at least one apertured element positioned upstream of the at least one spinnerette;

means for substantially uniformly heating the at least one apertured element to a temperature of at least about 250°C; and means for quenching molten filaments of extruded polymer in an oxidative atmosphere, as the molten filaments exit the at least one spinnerette, to effect oxidative chain scission degradation of at least a surface of the molten filaments to obtain filaments having a skin-core structure.

5 [0024] The present invention is also directed to a fiber or filament comprising an inner core of polymeric material; a surface zone surrounding the inner core, the surface zone comprising a concentration, e.g. a high concentration, of oxidative chain scission degraded polymeric material, so that the inner core and the surface zone comprise a skin-core structure; and the oxidative chain scission degraded polymeric material being substantially limited to the surface zone wherein the inner core and the surface zone comprise adjacent discrete portions of the skin-core structure.

10 [0025] In a still further aspect of the invention, the fiber or filament comprises an inner core of polymeric material; a surface zone having a thickness of at least about 0.5 µm, and more preferably at least about 1 µm, surrounding the inner core, the surface zone comprising oxidative chain scission degraded polymeric material, so that the inner core and the surface zone comprise a skin-core structure; and the oxidative chain scission degraded polymeric material being substantially limited to the surface zone so that the inner core and the surface zone comprise adjacent discrete portions of the skin-core structure.

15 [0026] The invention is also directed to a fiber or filament comprising an inner core of polymeric material; a surface zone surrounding the inner core, the surface zone comprising oxidative chain scission degraded polymeric material, so that the inner core and the surface zone comprise a skin-core structure; and the inner core has a melt flow rate substantially equal to an average melt flow rate of the inner core and the surface zone.

20 [0027] It is also an object of the present invention to provide non-woven materials comprising fibers according to the invention thermally bonded together, as well as to provide hygienic products comprising at least one absorbent layer, and at least one non-woven fabric comprising fibers of the present invention thermally bonded together. The hygienic article can comprise a diaper having an outer impermeable layer, an inner non-woven fabric layer, and an intermediate layer. Such hygienic products are disclosed in the above-referenced Kozulla and Gupta et al. patent specifications.

25 [0028] In general, in the processes according to the present invention the polymeric composition comprises a polyolefin.

[0029] In general, the apparatus according to the present invention is such that (i) said means for heating comprise at least one apertured element positioned upstream of said at least one spinnerette, and/or (ii) at least one spinnerette is provided which is substantially uniformly heated by direct resistance or impedance of that spinnerette, and/or (iii) the 30 means for feeding the polymer through the spinnerette are capable of obtaining a spinning speed of about 10 to 200 meters per minute, and/or (iv) the said spinnerette, the said means for feeding the polymer composition and the said quenching means are arranged for a short-spin process.

[0030] In general, the fibers and filaments according to the present invention are such that the polymeric material comprises a polyolefin.

35 [0031] The polymeric material in each of the above fibers or filaments can comprise various polyolefins. For example, polyolefins can comprise polyethylenes, such as low density polyethylenes, high density polyethylenes, and linear low density polyethylenes, including polyethylenes prepared by copolymerizing ethylene with at least one C₃-C₁₂ alpha-olefin; polypropylenes, such as atactic, syndiotactic, and isotactic polypropylene - including partially and fully isotactic, or at least substantially fully isotactic - polypropylenes; polybutenes; such as poly-1-butenes, poly-2-butenes, and 40 polyisobutylenes, and poly 4-methyl-1-pentenes. Preferably, the polymeric material comprises polypropylene, and, preferably, the inner core of the fiber or filament has a melt flow rate of about 10, and the average melt flow rate of the fiber or filament is about 11 or about 12.

[0032] In the process and apparatus of the present invention, the heating of the polymer composition at a location at or adjacent to the at least one spinnerette comprises heating the polymer composition to a temperature of at least about 45 200°C, preferably at least about 220°C, and more preferably at least about 250°C. Moreover, the extruding of the heated polymer composition comprises extruding at a temperature of at least about 200°C, preferably at least about 220°C, and more preferably at least about 250°C.

[0033] In the process and apparatus of the present invention, the spinnerette can be directly heated and/or an element associated with the spinnerette, such as an apertured plate, can be heated. Preferably, the spinnerette or the 50 associated element is substantially uniformly heated to ensure that substantially all, and preferably all, filaments extruded through the spinnerette are capable of achieving sufficient conditions to obtain a skin-core structure.

[0034] The heating of the spinnerette can be to a temperature of at least about 230°C, preferably at least about 250°C, and can be in the range of about 250°C to 370°C, preferably in the range of about 290°C to 360°C, and more preferably in the range of about 330°C to 360°C.

55 [0035] The spinnerette according to the present invention preferably contains about 500 to 150,000 capillaries, with preferred ranges being about 30,000 to 120,000 capillaries, about 30,000 to 70,000 capillaries, and about 30,000 to 45,000 capillaries. These capillaries can have a cross-sectional area of about 0.02 to 0.2 mm², preferably about 0.07 mm², and a length of about 1 to 20 mm, preferably a length of about 1 to 5 mm, and more preferably a length of about

1.5 mm. The capillaries can have a recess at a lower portion, and the recess can have a cross-sectional area of about 0.05 to 0.4 mm², preferably of about 0.3 mm², and a length of about 0.25 mm to 2.5 mm, preferably a length of about 0.5 mm.

[0036] Additionally, the capillaries can have a tapered upper portion. These tapered capillaries can comprise countersunk capillaries having a total length of about 3 to 20 mm, preferably about 7-10 mm; a first cross-sectional area of about 0.03 mm² to 0.2 mm² at a lower portion; a maximum cross-sectional area at a surface of the at least one spinnerette of about 0.07 mm² to 0.5 mm², preferably about 0.2 mm²; and the countersunk capillaries taper from the maximum cross-sectional area to the first cross-sectional area at an angle of about 20° to 60°, preferably about 35° to 45°, and more preferably about 45°. The countersunk capillaries can include a distance between the maximum cross-sectional area to the first cross-sectional area of about 0.15 to 0.4 mm.

[0037] The tapered capillaries can comprise counterbored, countersunk capillaries. These counterbored, countersunk capillaries can comprise an upper tapered portion having a diameter of about 0.6 mm and a length of about 0.5 mm; an upper capillary having a diameter of about 0.5 mm and a length of about 3.5 mm; a middle tapered portion having a length of about 0.1 mm; and a lower capillary having a diameter of about 0.35 mm and a length of about 1.5 mm.

[0038] Further, the tapered capillaries can comprise counterbored capillaries. These counterbored capillaries can comprise an upper capillary having a diameter of about 0.5 mm and a length of about 4 mm; a middle tapered portion having a length of about 0.1 mm; and a lower capillary having a diameter of about 0.35 mm and a length of about 2 mm.

[0039] When the heating comprises heating with an apertured element, preferably an apertured plate, the apertured plate is positioned upstream of the spinnerette, preferably about 1 to 4 mm, preferably about 2 to 3 mm, and more preferably about 2.5 mm. The spinnerette and the apertured plate can comprise a corresponding number of capillaries and have a corresponding pattern, or there can be a different number of capillaries and/or a different pattern. The capillaries in the apertured plate can have a cross-sectional area that is up to about 30% larger than the cross-sectional area of capillaries in the spinnerette.

[0040] The apertured plate preferably contains about 500 to 150,000 capillaries, with preferred ranges being about 30,000 to 120,000 capillaries, about 30,000 to 70,000 capillaries, and about 30,000 to 45,000 capillaries. These capillaries preferably having a cross-sectional area of about 0.03 mm² to 0.3 mm², more preferably of about 0.1 mm², and a length of about 1 to 5 mm, more preferably about 1.5 mm.

[0041] The heating of the apertured plate can be to a temperature of at least about 250°C, and can be in the range of about 250°C to 370°C, preferably in the range of about 280°C to 350°C, and more preferably in the range of about 300°C to 360°C.

[0042] The quenching can comprise any quench with an oxidative gas that flows at a high rate of speed, preferably about 3,000 to 12,000 ft/min (900 - 4000 m/min), more preferably about 4,000 to 9,000 ft/min (1200 - 2800 m/min) and even more preferably 5,000 to 7,000 ft/min (1500 - 2100 m/min). Preferably, the molten filaments are immediately quenched upon being extruded. Examples of quenching according to the present invention include radial quenching and quenching with adjustable nozzles blowing an oxidative gas. The adjustable nozzles are preferably directed at a central portion of the spinnerette, and preferably have an angle of about 0° to 60° with respect to a plane passing through the surface of the spinnerette, more preferably about 10° to 60°, and can also preferably be an angle of about 0° to 45°, more preferably 0° to 25°.

[0043] The heating can be accomplished using conduction, convection, induction, magnetic heating and/or radiation, and can be accomplished using impedance or resistance heating, inductance heating and/or magnetic heating, .

[0044] The polymer composition can comprise various spinnable polyolefins, such as polyethylene and polypropylene. The polymer can have usual spinning temperatures temperature, i.e., the polymer melt temperature, and a narrow or broad molecular weight distribution. For polypropylene, the temperature of the melt spin composition is about 200°C to 300°C, preferably 220°C to 260°C, and more preferably 230°C to 240°C, the melt flow rate is preferably about 0.5 to 40 dg/min, with preferred ranges being 5-25 dg/min, 10-20 dg/min, 9-20 dg/min and 9-15 dg/min. Preferably, the polypropylene composition has a broad molecular weight distribution of at least about 4.5. Moreover, polymer compositions as disclosed in either the Kozulla or Gupta et al. patent specifications referred to above can be utilized in the present invention. For example, the molecular weight distribution of the polymer composition can be at least about 5.5, as disclosed by Kozulla.

[0045] At least one metal carboxylate can be added to the polymer composition. The metal carboxylate can comprise at least one member selected from the group consisting of nickel salts of 2-ethylhexanoic, caprylic, decanoic and dodecanoic acids, and 2-ethylhexanoates of Fe, Co, Ca and Ba, such as nickel octoate.

[0046] Preferably, in each of the embodiments of the invention the polymer composition can be fed to the at least one spinnerette at a flow rate of about 10 to 200 meters per minute, and more preferably at a flow rate of about 80 to 100 meters per minute. Moreover, preferably, the extruded heated and/or partially degraded polymer composition can have a flow rate of about 10 to 200 meters per minute, and more preferably a flow rate of about 80 to 100 meters per minute. In other words, the preferred spinning speed is about 10 to 200 meters per minute, and more preferably about 80 to 100 meters per minute.

[0047] Additionally, the process and apparatus of the present invention are also preferably arranged so as to effect oxidative chain scission degradation of at least a surface of the molten filaments to obtain filaments having a skin-core structure capable of forming non-woven materials having a cross directional strength of at least 650 g/in (12.5 N/5 cm) for a 20 g/yd² (24 g/m²) fabric bonded at speeds of at least 250 ft/min (76 m/min).

5 [0048] The spinnerette can have various dimensions, with preferred dimensions being a width of about 30-150 mm and a length of about 300 to 700 mm, such as a width of about 40 mm and a length of about 450 mm, or a width of about 100 mm and a length of about 510 mm. The spinnerette can be circular having a preferred diameter of about 100 to 600 mm, more preferably about 400 mm, especially when using a radial quench.

10 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0049] The invention will be better understood and characteristics thereof are illustrated in the annexed drawings showing non-limiting embodiments of the invention, in which:

15 Fig. 1 illustrates a microphotograph of a polypropylene fiber stained with RuO₄ obtained using the Kozulla process. Fig. 2 illustrates a microphotograph of a polypropylene fiber stained with RuO₄ obtained using the process of the present invention.

20 Fig. 3 illustrates an electrically heated plate associated with a spinnerette for providing the skin-core filamentary structure according to the present invention;

25 Fig. 4 illustrates another embodiment of an electrically heated plate associated with a spinnerette for providing the skin-core filamentary structure according to the present invention;

30 Fig. 5 illustrates a spinnerette for providing the skin-core filamentary structure according to the present invention which is heated by induction heating;

35 Fig. 6 illustrates a spinnerette for providing the skin-core filamentary structure according to the present invention which includes countersunk tapered capillaries;

40 Fig. 7 illustrates a spinnerette for providing the skin-core filamentary structure according to the present invention which includes counterbored, countersunk capillaries;

45 Fig. 8 illustrates a spinnerette for providing the skin-core filamentary structure according to the present invention which includes counterbored capillaries;

50 Fig. 9 illustrates a spin pack assembly which includes an electrically heated spinnerette for providing the skin-core filamentary structure according to the present invention;

55 Fig. 10 illustrates a spin pack assembly which includes a heated spinnerette heated by induction heating for providing the skin-core filamentary structure according to the present invention;

Fig. 11 illustrates a radial quench apparatus which operates with an electrically heated spinnerette for providing the skin-core filamentary structure according to the present invention;

Fig. 12 illustrates movable nozzle apparatus for quenching the skin-core filamentary structure according to the present invention;

Figs. 13a, 13b, 13c and 13d illustrate the heated spinnerette used in the small-scale developmental tests in the examples tabulated in Table I;

Fig. 14 illustrates the spin pack assembly using the heated spinnerette in the small-scale developmental tests in the examples tabulated in Table I;

Fig. 15 illustrates the polymer feed distributor used in the small-scale developmental tests in the examples tabulated in Table I;

Figs. 16a and 16b illustrate the distributor used in the small-scale developmental tests in the examples tabulated in Table I;

Fig. 17 illustrates the spacer used in the small-scale developmental tests in the examples tabulated in Table I; and

Figs. 18a and 18b illustrate the lower clamping element used in the small-scale developmental tests in the examples tabulated in Table I.

Fig. 19 illustrates the spin pack assembly using the heated plate in the small-scale developmental tests in the examples tabulated in Table I; and

Figs. 20a and 20b illustrate the heated plate used in the small-scale developmental tests in the examples tabulated in Table I.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

55 [0050] To accomplish the objectives of obtaining fibers and filaments having a skin-core morphology, and especially the obtaining of fibers and filaments having a skin-core morphology in a short spin process, the present invention provides a sufficient environment to the polymeric material in the vicinity of its extrusion from the spinnerette. For example,

because this environment is not achievable in a short spin process solely by using a controlled quench, such as a delayed quench, as in the long spin process, and the long spin process needs a delayed quench, the environment for obtaining a skin-core fiber is obtained according to the present invention by using apparatus and procedures which promote at least partial surface degradation of the molten filaments when extruded through the spinnerette. In particular, in preferred embodiments of the present invention, various elements are associated with the spinnerette so as to provide a sufficient temperature environment, at least at the surface of the extruded polymeric material, to achieve a skin-core filament structure.

[0051] The present invention is directed to various forms of fibers, including filaments and staple fibers. These terms are used in their ordinary commercial meanings. Typically, herein, filament is used to refer to the continuous fiber on the spinning machine; however, as a matter of convenience, the terms fiber and filament are also used interchangeably herein. "Staple fiber" is used to refer to cut fibers or filaments. Preferably, for instance, staple fibers for non-woven fabrics useful in diapers have lengths of about 1 to 3 inches (2.5 - 7.5 cm), more preferably 1.25 to 2 inches (3.0 to 5 cm).

[0052] The substantially non-uniform morphological structure of the skin-core fibers according to the present invention can be characterized by transmission electron microscopy (TEM) of ruthenium tetroxide (RuO_4)-stained fiber thin sections. In this regard, as taught by Trent et al., in *Macromolecules*, Vol. 16, No. 4, 1983, "Ruthenium Tetroxide Staining of Polymers for Electron Microscopy", it is well known that the structure of polymeric materials is dependent on their heat treatment, composition, and processing, and that, in turn, mechanical properties of these materials such as toughness, impact strength, resilience, fatigue, and fracture strength can be highly sensitive to morphology. Further, this article teaches that transmission electron microscopy is an established technique for the characterization of the structure of heterogeneous polymer systems at a high level of resolution; however, it is often necessary to enhance image contrast for polymers by use of a staining agent. Useful staining agents for polymers are taught to include osmium tetroxide and ruthenium tetroxide. For the staining of the filaments and fibers of the present invention, ruthenium tetroxide is the preferred staining agent.

[0053] In the morphological characterization of the present invention, samples of filaments or fibers are stained with aqueous RuO_4 , such as a 0.5% (by weight) aqueous solution of ruthenium tetroxide obtainable from Polysciences, Inc., overnight at room temperature. (While a liquid stain is utilized in this procedure, staining of the samples with a gaseous stain is also possible.) Stained fibers are embedded in Spurr epoxy resin and cured overnight at 60°C. The embedded stained fibers are then thin sectioned on an ultramicrotome using a diamond knife at room temperature to obtain microtomed sections approximately 80 nm thick, which can be examined on conventional apparatus, such as a Zeiss EM-10

30 TEM, at 100kV. Energy dispersive x-ray analysis (EDX) was utilized to confirm that the RuO_4 had penetrated completely to the center of the fiber.

[0054] Fibers that are produced using the methods according to the present invention show an enrichment of the ruthenium (Ru residue) at the outer surface region of the fiber cross-section to a depth of at least about 0.5 μm , and preferably to a depth of at least about 1 μm with the cores of the fibers showing a much lower ruthenium content.

[0055] Another test procedure to illustrate the skin-core structure of the fibers of the present invention, and especially useful in evaluating the ability of a fiber to thermally bond, consists of the microfusion analysis of residue using a hot stage test. This procedure is used to examine for the presence of a residue following axial shrinkage of a fiber during heating, with the presence of a higher amount of residue directly correlating with the ability of a fiber to provide good thermal bonding. In this hot stage procedure, a suitable hot stage, such as a Mettler FP52 low mass hot stage controlled via a Mettler FP5 control processor, is set to 145°C. A drop of silicone oil is placed on a clean microscope slide. Fibers are cut into 1/2 mm lengths from three random areas of filamentary sample, and stirred into the silicone oil with a probe. The randomly dispersed sample is covered with a cover glass and placed on the hot stage, so that both ends of the cut fibers will, for the most part, be in the field of view. The temperature of the hot stage is then raised at a rate of 3°C/minute to 164°C. At approximately 163°C, the fibers shrink axially, and the presence or absence of trailing residues is observed. When the temperature reaches 164°C, the heating is stopped and the temperature reduced rapidly to 145°C. The sample is then examined through a suitable microscope, such as a Nikon SK-E trinocular polarizing microscope, and a photograph of a representative area is taken to obtain a still photo reproduction using, for example, a MTI-NC70 video camera equipped with a Pasecon videotube and a Sony Up-850 B/W videographic printer. A rating of "good" is used when the majority of fibers leave residues. A rating of "poor" is used when only a few percent of the fibers leave residues. Other comparative ratings are also available, and include a rating of "fair" which falls between "good" and "poor", a rating of "very good" which is positioned above "good", and a rating of "none" which, of course, falls below "poor".

[0056] The polymer material extruded into a skin-core filament structure can comprise any polyolefin that can be extruded in a long spin or short spin process to directly produce the skin-core structure in the filaments as they are formed at the exit of the spinnerette. For example, polyolefins can comprise polyethylenes, such as low density polyethylenes, high density polyethylenes, and linear low density polyethylenes, including polyethylenes prepared by copolymerizing ethylene with at least one $\text{C}_3\text{-C}_{12}$ alpha-olefin; polypropylenes, such as atactic, syndiotactic, and isotactic polypropylene - including partially and fully isotactic, or at least substantially fully isotactic - polypropylenes, poly-

butenes, such as poly-1-butenes, poly-2-butenes, and polyisobutylenes, and poly 4-methyl-1-pentenes

[0057] A polymer material to be extruded is a polymer material for the production of polyolefin fibers, preferably polypropylene fibers. Therefore, the composition to be extruded into filaments comprises an olefinic polymer, and preferably polypropylene.

5 [0058] The polymeric compositions to be extruded can comprise polymers having a narrow molecular weight distribution or a broad molecular weight distribution, with a broad molecular weight distribution being preferred for polypropylene.

[0059] Further, as used herein, the term polymer includes homopolymers, various polymers, such as copolymers and terpolymers, and mixtures (including blends and alloys produced by mixing separate batches or forming a blend *in situ*).

10 For example, the polymer can comprise copolymers of olefins, such as propylene, and these copolymers can contain various components. Preferably, in the case of polypropylene, such copolymers include up to about 10 weight % of at least one of ethylene and butene, but can contain varying amounts thereof depending upon the desired fiber or filament.

[0060] The melt flow rate (MFR) as described herein is determined according to ASTM D-1238 (condition L;230/2.16).

15 [0061] By practicing the process of the present invention, and by spinning polymer compositions using melt spin processes, such as a long spin or short spin process according to the present invention, fibers and filaments can be obtained which have excellent thermal bonding characteristics in combination with excellent tenacity, tensile strength and toughness. Moreover, the fibers and filaments of the present invention are capable of providing non-woven materials of exceptional cross-directional strength, toughness, elongation, uniformity, loftiness and softness using a short spin process, as well as a long spin process.

20 [0062] With regard to the above, while not wishing to be bound to any particular theory, by heating the polymer in the vicinity of the spinnerette, either by directly heating the spinnerette or an area adjacent to the spinnerette, filaments having polymeric zones of differing characteristics are obtained. In other words, the heating of the present invention heats the polymer composition at a location at or adjacent to the at least one spinnerette, by directly heating the spinnerette or an element such as a heated plate positioned approximately 1 to 4 mm above the spinnerette, so as to heat the polymer composition to a sufficient temperature to obtain a skin-core filament structure upon quenching in an oxidative atmosphere. For example, for a typical short spin process for the extrusion of polypropylene, the extrusion temperature of the polymer is about 230°C to 250°C, and the spinnerette has a temperature at its lower surface of about 200°C. This temperature of about 200°C does not permit oxidative chain scission degradation at the exit of the spinnerette. In this regard, a temperature of greater than about 200°C, preferably at least about 220°C, and even more preferably at least about 250°C is needed across the exit of the spinnerette in order to obtain oxidative chain scission degradation of the molten filaments to thereby obtain filaments having a skin-core structure. Accordingly, even though the polymeric material is heated to a sufficient temperature for melt spinning in known melt spin systems, such as in the extruder or at another location prior to being extruded through the spinnerette, the polymeric material cannot maintain a high enough temperature upon extrusion from the spinnerette, under oxidative quench conditions, without the heating supplied at or at a location adjacent to the spinnerette. In this regard, in the melt spin processes taught by the above-referred to Kozulla applications, the quenching is delayed so that the filament has sufficient time to remain at a high enough temperature to enable oxidative scission at the surface to obtain a skin-core structure.

25 [0063] Further, heat and mechanical degradation of the polymer just prior to its extrusion can assist in the obtaining of the skin-core structure. In other words, the controlling of the extrusion environment in the melt spin process enables the extruded material to have an inner zone of higher molecular weight molecules, and an outer zone of lower molecular weight molecules. The higher molecular weight molecules in the inner zone provide the fibers and filaments with high tenacity, tensile strength and toughness, while the lower molecular weight molecules in the outer zone provide sufficient flow characteristics for the fibers or filaments to achieve superior thermal bonding characteristics.

30 [0064] The oxidative quench of this process provides chain scission degradation of the molecular chains in the polymer at the outer zone, which, in comparison to the above-discussed Kozulla applications, is capable of controlling the interface between the inner, core zone and the outer, surface zone. In particular, the heating of the polymer and the oxidative quench contribute to provide the superior filamentary product obtained with the present process and apparatus. Thus, the heating conditions and the oxidative quench conditions are adjustable, with respect to each other, to obtain the skin-core filamentary structure of the present invention. Therefore, the present invention is capable of providing suitable conditions, even in a short spin process, that enable the creation of a skin, overcoming the inherent stabilizers in the polymer composition, when present.

35 [0065] More specifically, by utilizing the process and apparatus according to the present invention, greater degree of control is obtainable with respect to the structure of the skin-core fiber than when practicing the Kozulla process. In this regard, the interface between the core and skin of the skin-core structure of the present invention can be controlled so as to provide a gradient between the skin and the core as obtained in the Kozulla process, or can be controlled so as to provide distinct core and skin regions. In other words, a distinct step is obtainable between the core and skin of the present invention forming two adjacent discrete portions of the filament or fiber; whereas, in the Kozulla process a gradient is obtained between the core and the skin.

[0066] In particular, Figures 1 and 2 are microphotographs, at 5,000x, illustrating this difference for polypropylene fibers stained with RuO₄ obtained using the Kozulla process and the process according to the present invention, respectively. As can be seen from these microphotographs, the skin-core structure of the Kozulla fiber illustrated in Figure 1 is not very distinct, and there is a gradient area between the skin and the core. However, the skin-core structure illustrated in Figure 2, obtained using the process of the present invention, has a clear line of demarcation between the skin and the core, whereby two adjacent discrete portions are provided.

[0067] As a result of the above-described difference in structure between the Kozulla fiber and the fiber according to the present invention, the physical characteristics of the fibers are also different. For example, the average melt flow rate of the fibers obtained according to the present invention is only slightly greater than the melt flow rate of the polymer composition; whereas, in the Kozulla fiber, the average melt flow rate of the fiber is significantly greater than the melt flow rate of the polymer composition. More specifically, for a melt flow rate of the polymer composition of about 10 dg/min, the average melt flow rate of the fiber according to the present invention can be controlled to about 11 to 12 dg/min, which indicates that chain scission degradation has been limited to substantially the skin portion of the skin-core fiber. In contrast, the average melt flow rate for the Kozulla fiber is about 20 to 30 dg/min, which indicates that chain scission degradation has been effected in both the core and the skin of the Kozulla fiber.

[0068] In each of the embodiments according to the present invention, whether directly heating the spinnerette or heating in another manner, such as with a heated plate, the temperature of the polymer, the temperature of the heated spinnerette or plate, and the quench conditions are controlled to permit, even in a short spin process, the spinning of the filaments with a skin-core structure. In the situation wherein the polymer comprises polypropylene, preferred conditions for each of these variables include the following. The polymer to be extruded preferably has a temperature of about 200°C to 325°C, more preferably about 200°C to 300°C, even more preferably 220°C to 260°C, and most preferably about 230°C to 240°C. The heated spinnerette preferably has a temperature of at least about 230°C, preferably at least about 250°C, and can be in the range of about 250°C to 370°C, preferably in the range of about 290°C to 360°C, and more preferably in the range of about 330°C to 360°C. The apertured plate preferably is heated to a temperature of at least about 250°C, and can be in the range of about 250°C to 370°C, preferably in the range of about 280°C to 350°C, and more preferably in the range of about 300°C to 360°C. The oxidative quench gas has a preferred flow rate of about 3,000 to 12,000 ft/min (900 to 3600 m/min), more preferably a flow rate of about 4,000 to 9,000 ft/min (1200 to 2800 m/min), and even more preferably about 5,000 to 7,000 ft/min (1500 to 2100 m/min). These values can be varied depending on the polymer being treated, and the dimensions of the spin pack assembly including the spinnerette and/or the heated plate.

[0069] The oxidizing environment can comprise air, ozone, oxygen, or other conventional oxidizing environment, at a heated or ambient temperature, at a downstream portion of the spinnerette. The temperature and oxidizing conditions at this location must be maintained to ensure that, even in a short spin process, sufficient oxygen diffusion is achieved within the fiber so as to effect oxidative chain scission within at least a surface zone of the fiber to obtain the skin-core filament structure.

[0070] The temperature environment to obtain the skin-core filament structure can be achieved through a variety of heating conditions, and can include the use of heating through conduction, convection, inductance, magnetic heating and radiation. For example, resistance or impedance heating, laser heating, magnetic heating or induction heating can be used to heat the spinnerette or a plate associated with the spinnerette. Preferably, the heating substantially uniformly heats the spinnerette or the plate associated with the spinnerette. Further, the spinnerette or a plate associated with the spinnerette can comprise a hollow plate having a heat transfer fluid flowing therethrough or can be equipped with a band heater wrapped around its periphery. For example, with regard to magnetic heating, a magnetic field heating device as disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 5,025,124 by Alfredreen can be used to obtain heating of the spinnerette or its associated elements. These means for heating the extrudable polymer at or at a location adjacent to the spinnerette to obtain the skin-core filamentary structure are not exhaustive, and other means for heating the spinnerette or elements associated with the spinnerette are within this invention. In other words, various sources of heating means can be utilized with the present invention to heat the polymer melt composition, which is at a certain temperature when it reaches a location at or adjacent to the spinnerette, to ensure that the polymer melt composition is at a sufficient temperature when extruded through the spinnerette to obtain a skin-core filament structure upon quenching in an oxidative atmosphere.

[0071] In the drawings, several non-limiting embodiments of the invention are illustrated wherein various structures are provided to obtain the skin-core filamentary structure, especially using a short spin process. Referring to Fig. 3, there is schematically illustrated a spinnerette 1 having capillaries 2 through which polymer is extruded to be quenched by the oxidative gas flow Q to form filaments 3. Located above the spinnerette is a plate 4 having capillaries 5, which capillaries 5 correspond to capillaries 2 of the spinnerette 1. An electric current is provided, such as through leads 6 to the plate 4 to heat the plate either by resistance or impedance.

[0072] The plate 4 can be heated to a suitable temperature, such as a temperature of at least about 250°C to raise the temperature of the polymer as it approaches and passes through the plate 4. More specifically, as the polymer

passes through the plate 4, it is heated to a sufficient temperature to permit oxidative chain scission degradation of at least the surface of the molten filament upon extrusion from the spinnerette into the oxidative gas flow Q. While not being wished to be bound to any particular theory, in this embodiment, smaller molecular weight molecules are obtainable on the surface of the polymer (as compared to the core) when subjected to oxidative quench conditions due to the differential heating obtained on the surface of the extrudate, as well as due to the additional stress on the polymer stream as the polymer flows to and from the plate 4 to the spinnerette 1.

[0073] The distance "c" between the heated plate 4 and the spinnerette 1 can be varied depending upon the physical and chemical characteristics of the composition, the temperature of the composition and the dimensions of the capillaries 2. For example, for a melt flow rate of a polypropylene polymer of about 0.5 to 40 dg/min, and a temperature of about 10 200°C to 325°C, the capillaries 2 and 5 should have a cross-sectional area "a" of about 0.03 to 0.3 mm², preferably about 0.1 mm², and a length "b" of about 1 to 5 mm, preferably about 1.5 mm., and distance "c" should be about 1 to 4 mm, preferably about 2 to 3 mm, and more preferably about 2.5 mm.

[0074] The capillaries 2 and 5 can be of the same or substantially the same dimensions, as shown in Fig. 3, or can be of different dimensions, such as capillaries 2 being of a smaller or larger diameter than capillaries 5. For example, 15 as illustrated in Fig. 4, with similar parts being referred to with the same reference numerals but including primes therewith, capillaries 5' can have a larger diameter than capillaries 2'. In this instance, capillaries 5' would preferably be up to about 30% wider than capillaries 2', and preferably have a cross-sectional area of about 0.4 mm². A limiting factor on the size of capillaries 5' for embodiments wherein capillaries 5' correspond in number and/or pattern to the capillaries 2' is the ability to maintain the strength of the heated plate while fitting a large number of capillaries therein.

[0075] Moreover, as illustrated in Figs. 5 and 6, the spinnerette can be directly heated by various means whereby a heated plate can be omitted. For example, as shown in Fig. 5, an induction coil 7 can be positioned around the spinnerette 8 in order to heat the spinnerette to a sufficient temperature for obtaining the skin-core filament structure. The temperature to heat the spinnerette varies depending upon the chemical and physical characteristics of the polymer, the temperature of the polymer, and the dimensions of the capillaries 9. For example, for a melt flow rate of a polymer, such 25 as polypropylene, of about 0.5 to 40 dg/min, and a temperature of about 200°C to 325°C, the capillaries 9 would have a cross-sectional area "d" of about 0.02 to 0.2 mm², preferably about 0.07 mm², and a length "e" of about 1 to 20 mm, preferably about 1-5 mm, and more preferably about 1.5 mm.

[0076] Fig. 6 shows a modified spinnerette structure wherein the capillaries 10 of spinnerette 11 are countersunk on the upper surface 12 of the spinnerette 11 so that the capillaries 10 include a tapered, upper portion 13. Capillaries 10 have a total length of about 3 to 20 mm, preferably about 7-10 mm; a first cross-sectional area 10a of about 0.03 mm² to 0.2 mm² at a lower portion; a maximum cross-sectional area 10b at the surface 12 of about 0.07 mm² to 0.5 mm², preferably about 0.2 mm²; and the countersunk capillaries taper from the maximum cross-sectional area 10b to the first cross-sectional area 10a at an angle α of about 20° to 60°, preferably about 35° to 45°, and more preferably about 45°. The countersunk capillaries can include a distance "f" between the maximum cross-sectional area 10b to the first cross-sectional area 10a of about 0.15 to 0.4 mm.

[0077] As illustrated in Fig. 7, the capillaries can comprise counterbored, countersunk capillaries 49. These counterbored, countersunk capillaries can comprise an upper tapered portion 49a having an upper diameter 49b of about 0.6 mm and a length of about 0.5 mm. The upper diameter 49b tapers by an angle β of about 20° to 60°, preferably about 35° to 45°, and more preferably about 45°, to an upper capillary 49c having a diameter of about 0.5 mm and a length of about 3.5 mm. A middle tapered portion 49d having a length of about 0.1 mm and an angle γ of about 20° to 60°, preferably about 35° to 45°, and more preferably about 45°, connects the upper capillary 49c to a lower capillary 49e having a diameter of 0.35 mm and a length of about 1.5 mm.

[0078] As illustrated in Fig. 8, the capillaries can comprise counterbored capillaries 50. These counterbored capillaries 50 can comprise an upper capillary 50a having a diameter of about 0.5 mm and a length of about 4 mm. A middle tapered portion 50b having a length of about 0.1 mm tapers at an angle ϑ of about 20° to 60°, preferably about 35° to 45°, and more preferably about 45° to a lower capillary 50c having a diameter of 0.35 mm and a length of about 2 mm.

[0079] Any of the above-described spinnerettes can have a recess at a lower portion, such as recess 50d illustrated in Fig. 8. The recess can have a cross-sectional area of about 0.05 to 0.4 mm², preferably of about 0.3 mm², and a length of about 0.25 mm to 2.5 mm, preferably a length of about 0.5 mm.

[0080] Fig. 9 illustrates an exemplary illustration of a spin pack assembly according to the present invention for impedance heating of the spinnerette. In the spin pack assembly 14 of Fig. 9, polymer 15 enters the spin pack top 16, passes through filter screen 17, breaker plate 18, and through the heated spinnerette 19 supplied with low voltage through an adjustable clamp 21 from transformer 20.

[0081] This type of spin pack assembly is known in the art, with the exception of the heating of the spinnerette. Accordingly, the filter screen and breaker plate and materials of construction can be chosen using conventional guidelines for these assemblies.

[0082] For impedance heating of the spinnerette or heated plate the current is preferably about 500 to 3,000 amperes, the transformer tap voltage is preferably about 1 to 7 volts, and the total power should preferably be about 3 to 21 kilo-

watts. These values can be varied depending on the polymer being treated, and the dimensions of the spin pack assembly including the dimensions of the spinnerette and/or the heated plate.

[0083] Fig. 10 illustrates an exemplary illustration of a spin pack assembly according to the present invention for induction heating of the spinnerette. In the spin pack assembly 22 of Fig. 10, polymer 29 enters the spin pack top 23, passes through filter screen 24, breaker 25, and through spinnerette 26 heated by induction coil 28 which surrounds the spinnerette. Surrounding the spin pack assembly is a Dowtherm manifold 27.

[0084] For induction heating of the spinnerette or heated plate, the oscillating frequency is about 2 to 15 kilohertz, preferably about 5 kilohertz, and the power is about 2-15 kilowatts, preferably 5 kilowatts. However, as with impedance heating, these values can be varied depending on the polymer being treated, and the dimensions of the spin pack assembly including the dimensions of the spinnerette and/or the heated plate.

[0085] Fig. 11 illustrates a cross-sectional view of a radial quench short spin apparatus 30. The radial quench short spin apparatus, which is a modified version of apparatus manufactured by Meccaniche Morderne of Milan, Italy, includes a polymer inlet spin pump 31 through which the polymer that is heated to a first temperature, such as at 200°C to 300°C is fed by a plurality of polymer feed ducts 32 to the spin pack assemblies 33 having breaker plates 33a and 33b, and inner and outer retaining rings 33c and 33d and spinnerettes 34. The extruded polymer in the form of filaments F are drawn downwardly past the high rate of flow oxidative quench, illustrated by arrows 37, flowing between outer encasement 38 and the cone-shaped conduit 39, and through annular opening 35. As can be seen in Fig. 11, the annular opening 35 is formed by upper extension 38a of the outer encasement 38, which can be attached by bolts 38b, and metal plate 40. A set screw 41 can be tightened to adjustably secure the outer encasement 38 to provide differing lengths.

[0086] Moreover, a thermocouple 42a is positioned in a region near the spin pump 31 to measure the polymer feed temperature, and another thermocouple 42b is positioned near the top of a spinnerette assembly 33 to measure the polymer temperature at the spinnerette head. Bolts 44 are employed for releasably securing each of the spin pack assemblies 33 in place. A band heater 45 can surround the spin pack assemblies 33 for maintaining or adjusting the melt temperature of the polymer melt. Further, to obtain the heating of the electrically heated spinnerette in this embodiment to obtain the heating of the polymer melt at or at a location adjacent to the spinnerette, copper terminals 36 are attached to the spinnerette for connection to an electrical source (not shown). Also, insulation is provided at 46, 47 and 48.

[0087] The quench flow can be effected by other than the radial flow illustrated in Fig. 11, and various other manners of providing a high rate of oxidative quench gas to the filaments as they exit the spinnerette can be used. For example, a nozzle can be positioned relative to each spinnerette so as to direct a high flow rate of oxidative quench gas to the filaments as they exit each spinnerette. One such nozzle, as illustrated in Fig. 12, is available from Automatik of Germany. This nozzle 51 is movably mounted using elements 52 to most preferably be directed towards the center of the spinnerette 53 at an angle δ with respect to a plane longitudinal passing through the spinnerette of about 0° to 60°, more preferably about 10° to 60°, and can also preferably be an angle of about 0° to 45°, more preferably 0° to 25°.

[0088] The various elements of the spin pack assembly of the present invention can be constructed using conventional materials of construction, such as stainless steel, including 17-4PH stainless steel, 304 stainless steel and 416 stainless steel, and nickelchrome, such as nickelchrome-800H.

[0089] The spun fiber obtained in accordance with the present invention can be continuous and/or staple fiber of a monocomponent or bicomponent type, and preferably falls within a denier per filament (dpf) range of about 0.5-30, more preferably is no greater than about 5, and preferably is between about 0.5 and 3.0.

[0090] Additionally, in making the fiber in accordance with the present invention, at least one melt stabilizer and/or antioxidant is mixed with the extrudable composition. The melt stabilizer and/or antioxidant is preferably mixed in a total amount with the polypropylene to be made into a fiber in an amount ranging from about 0.005-2.0 weight % of the extrudable composition, preferably about 0.03-1.0 weight %. Such stabilizers are well known in polypropylene-fiber manufacture and include phenylphosphites, such as IRGAFOS 168 (available from Ciba Geigy Corp.), ULTRANOX 626 (available from General Electric Co.), and SANDOSTAB PEP-Q (available from Sandoz Chemical Co.); and hindered phenolics, such as IRGANOX 1076 (available from Ciba Geigy Corp.) and CYANOX 1790 (available from American Cyanamid Co.); and N,N'-bis-piperidinyl diamine-containing materials, such as CHIMASSORB 119 and CHIMASSORB 944 (available from Ciba Geigy Corp.). (IRGAFOS, ULTRANOX, SANDOSTAB, IRGANOX and CHIMASSORB may be registered trade marks.)

[0091] The at least one melt stabilizer and/or antioxidant can be mixed into the extrudable composition, or can be separately added to polypropylenes that are to be mixed together to form the extrudable composition.

[0092] Optionally, whiteners, such as titanium dioxide, in amounts up to about 2 weight %, antiacids such as calcium stearate, in amounts ranging from about 0.05-0.2 weight %, colorants, in amounts ranging from 0.01-2.0 weight %, and other well known additives can be included in the fiber of the present invention. Wetting agents, such as disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 4,578,414, are also usefully incorporated into the fiber of the present invention. Other commercially available useful additives include LUPERSOL 101 (available from Pennwalt Corp.). (LUPERSOL may be registered trade mark.)

[0093] Additionally, metal carboxylates can be added to the polymer material. These metal carboxylates are known

for use in polymer materials to be subjected to thermal bonding, and a small amount of metal carboxylates is believed to lower the surface fusion temperature of polymer materials, such as polypropylene fiber. Typical metal carboxylates include nickel salts of 2-ethylhexanoic, caprylic, decanoic and dodecanoic acids, and 2-ethylhexanoates of Fe, Co, Ca and Ba. Preferred metal carboxylates include nickel octoates, such as a 10% solution in mineral spirits of nickel octoate obtained from Shepherd Chemical Co., Cincinnati, Ohio. Preferably, the metal carboxylates are included in the polymer material to be made into fibers or filaments in a concentration of about 7 ppm to 1000 ppm, most preferably about 700 ppm.

[0094] In order to more clearly describe the present invention, the following non-limiting examples are provided. All parts and percentages in the examples are by weight unless indicated otherwise.

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EXAMPLES

[0095] Fibers were produced using both small-scale developmental tests and pilot plant tests, under the operating conditions tabulated in Table I. More specifically, the different polymers, their temperatures and spin conditions, and differing conditions are tabulated in Table I, accompanied by information pertaining to the skin-core structure of the resulting fibers based on microfusion analysis.

[0096] The test procedures tabulated in the examples in Table I include the following:

- 20 Examples 1-67 utilized a heated apertured plate in a small-scale developmental test, with Examples 22-44 incorporating 0.00019% Ultranox 626 as an antioxidant stabilizer.
- 25 Examples 68-75 and 188-196 utilized a heated spinnerette having recessed capillaries in a small-scale developmental test.
- 30 Examples 76-79 utilized a heated apertured plate in a small-scale developmental test wherein heating was achieved with a band heater.
- 35 Examples 80-89 utilized a heated spinnerette in a small-scale developmental test wherein heating was achieved with a band heater.
- 40 Examples 90-187 utilized a heated spinnerette having recessed capillaries in a pilot plant test, with Examples 90-150 using an extruder temperature of 240 to 280°C; and Examples 151-187 using an extruder temperature of 285 to 300°C.
- 45 Examples 197-202 utilized a heated spinnerette without recessed capillaries in a small-scale developmental test.
- 50 Examples 203-313 utilized a heated spinnerette without recessed capillaries in a pilot plant test.
- 55 Examples 314-319 utilized a heated spinnerette without recessed capillaries in a small-scale developmental test, wherein the polypropylene contained nickel octoate.
- 60 Examples 320-324 utilized a heated spinnerette without recessed capillaries in a small-scale developmental test, wherein the polymer was polyethylene.
- 65 Examples 325-331 utilized a spinnerette without recessed capillaries in a small-scale developmental test, wherein the polymer was polyester.

[0097] In the small-scale developmental test using a heated spinnerette, a directly heated spinnerette 60 was constructed from nickel chrome - 800H having dimensions, as illustrated in Fig. 13a, of 0.3 inch (7.6 mm) (dimension "g") x 0.25 inch (6.35 mm) (dimension "h") including 59 capillaries 61 positioned in alternating rows of 6 and 7 capillaries having a diameter of 0.012 inch (0.3 mm) and length of 0.12 inch (3 mm), with the spinnerette having a corresponding thickness of 0.12 inch (3 mm). In particular, there were 5 rows having 7 capillaries alternating with 4 rows having 6 capillaries, with the capillaries being spaced 0.03 inch (0.75 mm) (dimension "i") from each other, and 0.035 inch (0.90 mm) (dimension "j") from edges 62 of the spinnerette.

[0098] As illustrated in Figs. 13b, 13c and 13d, the spinnerette 60 is inserted into a recess 64 of spinnerette holder 63, which recess 64 has corresponding dimensions of 0.3 inch (7.6 mm) (dimension "g") by 0.25 inch (6.35 mm) (dimension "h") to the spinnerette 60, and a depth of 0.1 inch (2.5 mm) (dimension "o"). The spinnerette holder has an upper portion 65 having a diameter of 0.745 inch (19.0 mm) (dimension "n"), and a thickness of 0.06 inch (1.5 mm) (dimension "l"), and a lower portion 66 having a diameter 0.625 inch (16.0 mm) (dimension "m") and a thickness to provide an overall thickness of 0.218 inch (5.5 mm) (dimension "k") for the spinnerette holder 63. Further, copper terminals 68 were connected to the upper surface 67 of the spinnerette holder 63 for connection to a power source (not shown).

[0099] As illustrated schematically in Fig. 14, this spinnerette was mounted in a spin pack assembly 69. The spin pack assembly 69 included, in sequential order, a polymer feed distributor 70, a filter 71, a distributor 72, a spacer 73, the spinnerette 60, and a lower clamping element 74. The spin pack assembly was attached to a polymer pipe 108 for directing polymer through inlet 109 to the spin pack assembly 69. Further, a band heater 110 and insulation 111 surrounded the assembly.

[0100] As illustrated in Fig. 15, the polymer feed distributor 70, which was constructed from 17-4PH stainless steel

included a lower portion 75 having a diameter of 0.743 inch, (19.0 mm) (dimension "p") and a thickness of 0.6 inch (15 mm) (dimension "q"), and an upper portion 76 having a diameter of 0.646 inch (16.4 mm) (dimension "r") and a thickness to provide an overall thickness to the polymer feed distributor 70 of 0.18 inch (4.6 mm) (dimension "s"). Centrally located in the polymer feed distributor 70 was a conically-spaced opening 77 having, on surface 78, a lower diameter of 0.625 inch (16.0 mm) (dimension "t") tapering inwardly and upwardly to upper surface 79 at an angle "u" of 72°.

[0101] The filter screen 71 included a combination of three 304 stainless steel screens surrounded by a 24 gauge (0.02 inch (0.5 mm) thick) aluminum binder. The filter screens included a first screen of 250 mesh, a second screen of 60 mesh and a third screen of 20 mesh. The aluminum binder had an inner diameter (forming an opening for the filter screen) of 0.63 inch (15.0 mm), an outer diameter of 0.73 inch (18.5 mm), and a thickness of 0.094 inch (2.4 mm).

[0102] As illustrated in Figs. 16a and 16b, the distributor 72, which was constructed from 17-4PH stainless steel, included an element 85 of round cross-section having a diameter of 0.743 inch (19.0 mm) (dimension "v") and a thickness of 0.14 inch (3.5 mm) (dimension "w"). A square-shaped recess 83 was centrally located in the upper surface 82 of the element 85 having edges 86 of 0.45 inch (11.4 mm) (dimension "x") and a depth to a lower recess surface 83 of 0.02 inch (0.5 mm) (dimension "y"). The element further included 46 capillaries enabling flow of polymer from the lower recess surface 83 through the lower surface 84 of element 85. The capillaries had a diameter of 3/64 inch (1.2 mm), were uniformly spaced, and included 4 rows of seven capillaries alternating with 3 rows of 6 capillaries. The capillaries were spaced from edges 86 of the recess 80 by approximately 0.06 inch (1.5 mm).

[0103] As illustrated in Fig. 17, the spacer 73, which was constructed from 416 stainless steel, included an upper element 87 having an outer diameter of 0.743 inch (19.0 mm) (dimension "z") and a thickness of 0.11 inch (2.8 mm) (dimension "aa") and a lower element 88 having an outer diameter of 0.45 inch (11.4 mm) (dimension "bb") and a thickness of 0.07 inch (1.8 mm) (dimension "cc") to provide an overall thickness of 0.18 inch (4.6 mm) (dimension "dd"). Further, the spacer 73 included an opening 89 having a maximum diameter at the surface 91 of the upper element 87 and tapered inwardly and downwardly along the conically-shaped taper 90 to point 92 where the lower element 88 begins, and then maintained a constant diameter of 0.375 inch (9.5 mm) (dimension "ff") to lower surface 93.

[0104] As illustrated in Figs 18a and 18b, lower clamping element 74, which was constructed from 416 stainless steel included an element 94 having an outer diameter of 2 inches (50 mm) (dimension "gg") and a thickness of 0.4 inch (10 mm) (dimension "kk"). An opening 95 communicated upper surface 96 of element 94 to lower surface 97. Opening 95 included a maximum diameter of 0.75 inch (19 mm) (dimension "hh") at the upper surface 96, and maintained this maximum diameter for 0.34 inch (8.6 mm) (dimension "ii") where the diameter was reduced to 0.64 inch (16.2 mm) (dimension "jj") and maintained this reduced diameter until lower surface 97, whereby a recessed surface 98 was obtained against which the spinnerette holder 63 was pressed when bolts (not shown) positioned in openings 99 were tightened. For ease in viewing the figures, openings 99 have been omitted from Fig. 18b. Slot 100 having a width of 0.25 inch (6.4 mm) (dimension "ll") was located in the element 94 to a depth of 0.28 inch (7.0 mm) (dimension "mm") for receiving and permitting the copper terminals 68 to protrude from the spin pack assembly 69.

[0105] In the small-scale developmental test using a heated plate, the structure of the spin pack assembly was similar to that of the above-described heated spinnerette assembly; however, the heated plate was added to the assembly and the spinnerette had a different number of capillaries. In particular, as seen in Fig. 19, the small-scale developmental test assembly 101 included a spin pack assembly 102 having a polymer feed distributor 103, a filter screen 104, a distributor 105, a heated plate 106, a spinnerette 60, copper terminal 68 and a lower clamping element 107. Additionally, in a similar manner to the above-described heated spinnerette embodiment, the spin pack assembly 102 was attached to a polymer pipe 108 for directing polymer through inlet 109 to the spin pack assembly 102. Further, a band heater 110 and insulation 111 surrounded the assembly.

[0106] As illustrated in Figs. 20a and 20b, the heated plate 112, which was constructed of stainless steel, is similar in construction to the distributor 72 as illustrated in Figs. 16a and 16b. However, in contrast to the distributor, the heated plate 112 included copper terminals 113 for connection to a source of electricity (not shown) and included 186 capillaries 115 situated below a 0.1 inch (2.5 mm) deep recess 116 for flow of polymer in the direction indicated by arrow 114. The capillary layout is illustrated in Fig. 20a, wherein there are partially shown 186 capillaries 115 positioned in alternating rows of 15 and 16 capillaries having a diameter of 0.012 inch (0.3 mm) and a length of 0.078 inch (2 mm). In particular, in an area having a length along edge 116 of 0.466 inch (11.8 mm) (dimension "nn") and a width along edge 117 of 0.442 inch (11.2 mm) (dimension "oo"), there were positioned 6 rows having 16 capillaries alternating with 6 rows having 15 capillaries, with the distance between capillaries, on center, being 0.027 inch (0.7 mm) along edge 116 and 0.034 inch (0.86 mm) along edge 117, with end capillaries on the rows having 16 capillaries being spaced from edge 117 by 0.03 inch (0.76 mm) and end capillaries on the rows having 15 capillaries being spaced from edge 117 by 0.04 inch (1.0 mm). Moreover, in the heated plate small-scale developmental test, the spinnerette had 186 capillaries of the same pattern as the heated plate, but had a diameter of 0.008 inch (0.2 mm) and a length of 0.006 inch (1.5 mm).

[0107] For examples wherein a spinnerette having recessed capillaries in a small-scale developmental test was used, the capillaries had a diameter of 0.3 mm and a total length of 4.0 mm, and the recessed portions had a diameter of 0.5 mm and a length of 1.0 mm.

[0108] For examples wherein a heated spinnerette in a pilot plant test was used, the spinnerette included 30,500 capillaries having a diameter of 0.3 mm and a length of 1.5 mm. A 20 Kilowatt transformer having a maximum voltage of 7.5 volts, and a nominal voltage of 2 to 3 volts, with the secondary current being 34 times the primary current, was used for heating the spinnerette.

5 [0109] For examples wherein a band heater is used, the band heater was a CHROMALOX mica insulated band heater of 150 watts and 120 volts. (CHROMALOX may be registered trade mark.)

[0110] Further, quenching was achieved in the various examples using a nozzle to blow room temperature air at about 4,000-6,000 ft/min (1200 - 1800 m/min). Additionally, in Table I, Polymer A denotes linear isotactic polypropylene pellets having a melt flow rate of 18 ± 2 dg/min obtained from Himont, Inc., Polymer B denotes linear isotactic polypropylene 10 pellets having a melt flow rate of 9.5 ± 2 dg/min obtained from Himont, Inc., Stabilizer denotes the antioxidant stabilizer Ultranox 626 obtained from the General Electric Co., PE denotes DOW 6811A polyethylene, and polyester was Barrette Southern recycled bottle chips.

[0111] In Table I, which follows, any temperature (F) expressed in °F may be converted into the corresponding temperature (C) in °C by the formula $C = (F-32)/1 \cdot 8$.

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TABLE I

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
1	Heated Plate No Electrical Current	Polymer A	294	59	No streak Spinnerette Temp 231°C
2	Heated Plate No Electrical Current	Polymer A	303	59	Spinnerette Temp 277°C Slight Streak Spinnerette Temp Going Down With Time
3	Heated Plate Volt=.5 Current=250A	Polymer A	303	59	Some Sign of Skin Spinnerette 261°C
4	Heated Plate Volt=1 Current=100A	Polymer A	269	59	No Streak Spinnerette Temp 259°C
5	Heated Plate Volt=.74 Current=275A	Polymer A	255	59	Spinnerette Temp 220°C Streak Poor Needed Continuous Voltage Control Rather Than Changing Tap to Control Current
6	Heated Plate No Current	Polymer A	260	50	No Streak
7	Heated Plate Current=160A	Polymer A	264	50	Plate Temp 196°C Spinnerette Temp 191°C No Streak

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TABLE I

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
8	Heated Plate Current=200A	Polymer A	267	50	No Streak Plate Temp 213°C Spinnerette Temp 206°C
9	Heated Plate Current=240A	Polymer A	270	50	Plate Temp 229°C Spinnerette Temp 220°C Slight Streak
10	Heated Plate Current=260A	Polymer A	273	50	Plate Temp 242°C Spinnerette Temp 233°C No Streak
11	Heated Plate Current=280A	Polymer A	274	50	Plate Temp 249°C Spinnerette Temp 240°C Some Streak (Fair)
12	Heated Plate Current=300A	Polymer A	268	50	Plate Temp 252°C Spinnerette Temp 240°C No Streak Nozzle Angle=8°
13	Heated Plate Current=310A	Polymer A	264	50	Plate Temp 216°C Spinnerette Temp 210°C No Streak Quench Jet Angle=11°
14	Heated Plate Current=310A	Polymer A	262	60	Plate Temp 219°C Spinnerette Temp 222°C Some Sign of Streak Quench Jet Angle=16°

TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
15	Heated Plate Current=320A	Polymer A	266	60	Plate Temp 220°C Spinnerette 233°C No Streak Quench Jet Angle=16°
16	Heated Plate Current=330A	Polymer A	267	60	Plate Temp 231°C Spinnerette Temp 233°C Streak Poor Quench Jet Angle=17°
17	Heated Plate Current=340A	Polymer A	264	60	Plate Temp 220°C Spinnerette Temp 233°C No Streak Angle=17°
18	Heated Plate Current=350A	Polymer A	262	60	Plate Temp 219°C Spinnerette Temp 221°C No Streak
19	Heated Plate Current=360A	Polymer A	262	50	Plate Temp 211°C Spinnerette Temp 219°C No Streak
20	Heated Plate Current 370A	Polymer A	257	50	Plate Temp 205°C Spinnerette Temp 202°C No Streak
21	Heated Plate Current=380A	Polymer A	256	50	Plate Temp 208°C Spinnerette Temp 205°C No Streak

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TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
22	Heated Plate No Current	Polymer B Stabilizer	295	50	Plate Temp 197°C Spinnerette Temp 179°C No Streak Nozzle Angle=0°
23	Heated Plate Current=270A	Polymer B Stabilizer	303	50	Plate Temp 275°C Spinnerette Temp 254°C Evidence of Streak
24	Heated Plate Current=190A	Polymer B Stabilizer	303	50	Plate Temp 290°C Spinnerette Temp 233°C No Streak
25	Heated Plate Current=240A	Polymer B Stabilizer	303	50	Plate Temp 300°C Spinnerette Temp 245°C Excellent Streak (Skin Core Evident)
26	Heated Plate Current=260A	Polymer B Stabilizer	308	50	Plate Temp 297°C Spinnerette Temp 261°C Sign of Streak
27	Heated Plate Current=280A	Polymer B Stabilizer	305	50	Plate Temp 309°C Spinnerette Temp 260°C
28	Heated Plate Current 300A	Polymer B Stabilizer	308	50	Plate Temp 309°C Spinnerette Temp 269°C Sign of Skin Core
29	Heated Plate Current=300A	Polymer B Stabilizer	290	50	Plate Temp 300°C Spinnerette Temp 261°C Sign of Skin Core
30	Heated Plate Current=320A	Polymer B Stabilizer	283	50	Spinnerette Temp 258°C Sign of Skin Core

TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
31	Heated Plate Current=320A	Polymer B Stabilizer	278	50	Spinnerette Temp 257°C No Streak
32	Heated Plate Current=320A	Polymer B Stabilizer	270	50	Spinnerette Temp 243°C Sign of Streak
33	Heated Plate Current=360A	Polymer B Stabilizer	265	50	Spinnerette Temp 265°C Evidence of Streak
34	Heated Plate No Current	Polymer B Stabilizer	299	50	Spinnerette Temp 190°C No Streak
35	Heated Plate No Current	Polymer B Stabilizer	280	50	Spinnerette Temp 189°C No Streak
36	Heated Plate Current 240A	Polymer B Stabilizer	278	50	Spinnerette Temp 199°C Sign of Streak
37	Heated Plate Current=260A	Polymer B Stabilizer	281	50	Spinnerette Temp 203°C No Streak
38	Heated Plate Current=280A	Polymer B Stabilizer	281	50	Spinnerette Temp 190°C No Streak
39	Heated Plate Current=300A	Polymer B Stabilizer	273	50	Spinnerette Temp 190°C No Streak
40	Heated Plate Current=320A	Polymer B Stabilizer	281	50	Spinnerette Temp 201°C No Streak
41	Heated Plate Current=320A	Polymer B Stabilizer	270	50	Spinnerette Temp 198°C No Streak
42	Heated Plate Current=340A	Polymer B Stabilizer	213	50	Spinnerette Temp 213°C No Streak

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TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
43	Heated Plate Current=360A	Polymer B Stabilizer	283	50	Spinnerette Temp 218°C Sign of Streak
44	Heated Plate Current=360A	Polymer B Stabilizer	282	50	Spinnerette Temp 243°C Sign of Streak
45	Heated Plate Current=200A	Polymer B	300	50	Spinnerette Temp 189°C No Streak Quench Nozzle Angle=0°
46	Heated Plate Current=240A	Polymer B	296	50	Spinnerette Temp 197°C No Streak Quench Nozzle Angle=7°
47	Heated Plate Current=240A	Polymer B	303	50	Spinnerette Temp 225°C Some Sign of Streak Nozzle Angle=0°
48	Heated Plate Current=300A	Polymer B	303	50	Spinnerette Temp 210°C No Streak
49	Heated Plate Current=360A	Polymer B	307	50	Spinnerette Temp 242°C Sign of Streak
50	Heated Plate Current=0	Polymer B	301	50	Spinnerette Temp 181°C No Streak This Series Had Electrical Isolation Problem
51	Heated Plate Current=200A	Polymer B	295	50	Spinnerette Temp 181°C Hand Held

TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C.)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
52	Heated Plate Current=360A	Polymer B	305	50	No Spinnerette Temperature Thermocouple Broke Sign of Streak
53	Heated Plate Current=360A	Polymer B	279	50	No Spinnerette Temp Thermocouple Broke No Streak
54	Heated Plate Current=360A	Polymer B	279	50	No Spinnerette Temp Thermocouple Broke No Streak
55	Heated Plate Current=250A	Polymer B	286	50	No Spinnerette Temp Thermocouple Broke No Streak
56	Heated Plate Current=0	Polymer B	286	50	No Spinnerette Temp Thermocouple Broke No Streak
57	Heated Plate Current=240A	Polymer B	290	50	Spinnerette Temp 192°C New Thermocouple
58	Heated Plate Current=260A	Polymer B	284	50	Spinnerette Temp 290°C No Streak
59	Heated Plate Current=320A	Polymer B	280	50	Spinnerette Temp 220°C No Streak
60	Heated Plate Current=360A	Polymer B	280	50	Spinnerette Temp 234°C No Streak
61	Heated Plate Current=380A	Polymer B	282	50	Spinnerette Temp 250°C sign of Streak

TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
62	Heated Plate Current=320A	Polymer B	281	50	Spinnerette Temp 233°C Sign of Streak (Fair)
63	Heated Plate Current=320A	Polymer B	300	50	Spinnerette Temp 247°C No Streak
64	Heated Plate Current=340A	Polymer B	300	50	Spinnerette Temp 255°C Sign of Streak (Fair-to-Good)
65	Heated Plate Current=360A	Polymer B	302	50	Spinnerette Temp 268°C Sign of Streak (Fair-to-Good)
66	Heated Plate Current=280A	Polymer B	299	50	Spinnerette Temp 230°C No Streak
67	Heated Plate Current=0	Polymer B	292	50	Spinnerette Temp 194°C No Streak
68	Directly heated Current=0 Recessed Spinnerette	Polymer B	297	50	Spinnerette Temp 180°C No Streak
69	Current=240A Recessed Spinnerette	Polymer B	297	50	Spinnerette Temp 238°C No Streak
70	Current=260A Recessed Spinnerette	Polymer B	299	50	Spinnerette Temp 243°C No Streak

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TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
71	Current=280A Recessed Spinnerette	Polymer B	303	50	Spinnerette Temp 265°C Sign of Streak (Fair)
72	Current=300A Recessed Spinnerette	Polymer B	304	50	Spinnerette Temp 270°C Sign of Streak (Fair)
73	Current=320A Recessed Spinnerette	Polymer B	303	50	Spinnerette Temp 283°C Sign of Streak (Good)
74	Current=340A Recessed Spinnerette	Polymer B	305	50	Spinnerette Temp 295°C Sign of Streak (Very Good)
75	Current=200A Recessed Spinnerette	Polymer B	301	50	Spinnerette Temp 220°C No Streak
76	Heated Plate No Current Band Heater is Used	Polymer B	289	100	Plate Temp 215°C Spinnerette Temp 215°C No Streak
77	Heated Plate No Current	Polymer B	295	100	Plate Temp 265°C Spinnerette Temp 257°C No Streak
78	Heated Plate Heat On	Polymer B	312	100	Plate Temp 275°C Spinnerette Temp 265°C No Streak

TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
79	Heated Plate Heat On	Polymer B	310	100	Plate Temp 280°C Spinnerette Temp 271°C No Streak
80	No Heat Heated Spinnerette by a Band Heater	Polymer B	311	50	Spinnerette Temp 215°C No Streak
81	Heat On	Polymer B	318	50	Spinnerette Temp 260°C Sign of Streak
82	Heat On	Polymer B	318	100	Could Not Spin for Some Reason
83	Heated Spinnerette Current=0	Polymer B	301	100	Spinnerette Temp 100°C No Streak
84	Current=200A	Polymer B	303	100	Spinnerette Temp 114°C No Streak
85	Current=240A	Polymer B	294	100	Spinnerette Temp 108°C No Streak
86	Current=260A	Polymer B	295	100	Spinnerette Temp 112°C No Streak
87	Current=280A	Polymer B	297	100	Spinnerette Temp 116°C No Streak
88	Current=300A	Polymer B	298	100	Spinnerette Temp 121°C No Streak

TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
89	Current=340A	Polymer B	298	100	Spinnerette Temp 135°C No Streak
90	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=18A	Polymer B	260	33	Spinnerette Temp 490°F No Streaks
91	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=21A	Polymer B	260	33	Spinnerette Temp 491°F No Streaks
92	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=27A	Polymer B	260	33	Spinnerette Temp 570°F No Streaks
93	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=29A	Polymer B	260	33	Spinnerette Temp 519°F No Streaks
94	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=35A	Polymer B	260	33	Spinnerette Temp 538°F No Streaks
95	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=41A	Polymer B	260	33	Spinnerette Temp 557°F No Streaks

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TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
96	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=41A	Polymer B	260	33	Spinnerette Temp 567°F Sign of Streaks
97	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=45A	Polymer B	260	33	Spinnerette Temp 597°F Signs of Streak
98	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=12A	Polymer B	270	33	Spinnerette Temp 490°F No Streaks
99	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=18A	Polymer B	270	33	Spinnerette Temp 510°F No Streaks
100	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=21A	Polymer B	270	33	Spinnerette Temp 520°F No Streaks
101	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=25A	Polymer B	270	33	Spinnerette Temp 530°F No Streaks
102	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=27A	Polymer B	270	33	Spinnerette Temp 540°F Sign of Streaks

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TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
103	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=.28A	Polymer B	270	33	Spinnerette Temp 550°F No Streaks
104	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=.32A	Polymer B	270	33	Spinnerette Temp 560°F No Streaks
105	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=.36A	Polymer B	270	33	Spinnerette Temp 570°F No Streaks
106	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=0	Polymer B	280	33	Spinnerette Temp 490°F No Streaks
107	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=.08A	Polymer B	280	33	Spinnerette Temp 500°F No Streaks
108	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=.13A	Polymer B	280	33	Spinnerette Temp 510°F No Streaks
109	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=.16A	Polymer B	280	33	Spinnerette Temp 520°F No Streaks

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TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
110	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=20A	Polymer B	280	33	Spinnerette Temp 530°F Sign of Streaks
111	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=22A	Polymer B	280	33	Spinnerette Temp 540°F No Streaks
112	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=25A	Polymer B	280	33	Spinnerette Temp 550°F No Streaks
113	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=28A	Polymer B	280	33	Spinnerette Temp 560°F Sign of Streaks
114	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=30A	Polymer B	280	33	Spinnerette Temp 570°F Sign of Streaks
115	Spinnerette Primary Current=9A	Polymer B	290	33	Spinnerette Temp 520°F No Streaks
116	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=13A	Polymer B	290	33	Spinnerette Temp 530°F No Streaks

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TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
117	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=18A	Polymer B	290	33	Spinnerette Temp 540°F No Streak
118	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=13A	Polymer B	250	33	Spinnerette Temp 490°F No Streaks
119	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=18A	Polymer B	250	33	Spinnerette Temp 500°F No Streak
120	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=22A	Polymer B	250	33	Spinnerette Temp 510°F No Streaks
121	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=26A	Polymer B	250	33	Spinnerette Temp 520°F No Streak
122	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=30A	Polymer B	250	33	Spinnerette Temp 530°F No Streaks
123	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=33A	Polymer B	250	33	Spinnerette Temp 540°F No Streaks

TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
124	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=36A	Polymer B	250	33	Spinnerette Temp 550°F No Streaks
125	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=39A	Polymer B	250	33	Spinnerette Temp 560°F Sign of Streaks
126	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=42A	Polymer B	250	33	Spinnerette Temp 570°F No Streaks
127	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=20A	Polymer B	240	33	Spinnerette Temp 490°F No Streaks
128	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=24A	Polymer B	240	33	Spinnerette Temp 500°F No Streaks
129	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=25A	Polymer B	240	33	Spinnerette Temp 510°F No Streaks
130	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=31A	Polymer B	240	33	Spinnerette Temp 520°F No Streaks

TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
1.31	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=34A	Polymer B	240	33	Spinnerette Temp 510°F No Streaks
1.32	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=37A	Polymer B	240	33	Spinnerette Temp 540°F No Streaks
1.33	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=40A	Polymer B	240	33	Spinnerette Temp 550°F No Streaks
1.34	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=42A	Polymer B	240	33	Spinnerette Temp 560°F No Streaks
1.35	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=44A	Polymer B	240	33	Spinnerette Temp 570°F No Streaks
1.36	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=47A	Polymer B	240	33	Spinnerette Temp 580°F Slight Streaks
1.37	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=53A	Polymer B	240	33	Spinnerette Temp 601°F Slight Streaks (Fair-to-Good)

TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
138	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=57A	Polymer B	240	80	Spinnerette Temp 606°F Sign of Streaks
139	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=50A	Polymer B	240	80	Spinnerette Temp 591°F No Streaks
140	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=54A	Polymer B	240	80	Spinnerette Temp 596°F Sign of Streaks
141	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=55A	Polymer B	240	80	Spinnerette Temp 601°F sign of Streaks
142	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=51A	Polymer B	250	80	Spinnerette Temp 587°F Signs of Streaks (Fair)
143	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=58A	Polymer B	250	80	Spinnerette Temp 592°F Sign of Streaks (Good)
144	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=63A	Polymer B	240	80	Spinnerette Temp 600°F sign of Streaks (Fair)

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TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
145	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=0	Polymer B	260	66	Spinnerette Temp 590°F Sign of Streak (Fair)
146	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=42A	Polymer B	260	66	Spinnerette Temp 585°F No Streaks
147	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=43A	Polymer B	260	66	Spinnerette Temp 580°F No Streaks
148	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=NA	Polymer B	260	66	Spinnerette Temp 575°F sign of Streaks
149	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=47A	Polymer B	260	66	Spinnerette Temp 595°F No Streaks
150	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=47A	Polymer B	260	66	Spinnerette Temp 600°F No Streaks Spin Bad, Too Hot
151	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=0	Polymer B	285	66	Spinnerette Temp 504°F No Streaks

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TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
152	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=18A	Polymer B	285	66	Spinnertte Temp 573°F Sign of Streaks
153	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=25A	Polymer B	285	66	Spinnertte Temp 583°F Sign of Streaks
154	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=25A	Polymer B	285	66	Spinnertte Temp 595°F No Streaks
155	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=27A	Polymer B	285	66	Spinnertte Temp 601°F Sign of Streaks
156	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=29A	Polymer B	285	66	Spinnertte Temp 610°F No Streaks
157	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=NA	Polymer B	290	66	Spinnertte Temp 519°F
158	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=20A	Polymer B	290	66	Spinnertte Temp 573°F No Streaks

TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
159	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=23A	Polymer B	290	66	Spinnertte Temp 582°F No Streaks
160	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=25A	Polymer B	290	66	Spinnertte Temp 592°F Sign of Streaks
161	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=28A	Polymer B	290	66	Spinnertte Temp 601°F No Streaks
162	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=29A	Polymer B	290	66	Spinnertte Temp 610°F Sign of Streaks
163	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=NA	Polymer B	295	66	Spinnertte Temp 524°F No Streaks
164	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=24A	Polymer B	295	66	Spinnertte Temp 574°F No Streaks
165	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=27A	Polymer B	295	66	Spinnertte Temp 582°F No Streaks

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TABLE I (continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
166	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=29A	Polymer B	295	66	Spinnerette Temp 592°F No Streaks
167	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=32A	Polymer B	295	66	Spinnerette Temp 600°F No Streaks
168	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=29A	Polymer B	295	66	Spinnerette Temp 610°F Sign of Streaks
169	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=0	Polymer B	285	66	Spinnerette Temp 500°F No Streaks
170	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=22A	Polymer B	285	66	Spinnerette Temp 574°F No Streaks
171	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=31A	Polymer B	260	66	Spinnerette Temp 581°F No Streaks
172	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=31A	Polymer B	260	66	Spinnerette Temp 592°F Sign of Streaks

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TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
173	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=33A	Polymer B	260	66	Spinnerette Temp 601°F No Streaks
174	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=35A	Polymer B	260	66	Spinnerette Temp 610°F No Streaks
175	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=0	Polymer B	265	66	Spinnerette Temp 483°F Sign of Streaks
176	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=26A	Polymer B	265	66	Spinnerette Temp 573°F No Streaks
177	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=31A	Polymer B	265	66	Spinnerette Temp 583°F Sign of Streak (Good)
178	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=32A	Polymer B	265	66	Spinnerette Temp 592°F Sign of Streak (Good)
179	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=33A	Polymer B	265	66	Spinnerette Temp 601°F Sign of Streaks (Fair)

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TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
180	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=34A	Polymer B	265	66	Spinnertte Temp 610°F Sign of Streaks (Good)
181	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=0	Polymer B	270	66	Spinnertte Temp 490°F No Streaks
182	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=24A	Polymer B	270	66	Spinnertte Temp 573°F No Streaks
183	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=27A	Polymer B	270	66	Spinnertte Temp 581°F No Streaks
184	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=29A	Polymer B	270	66	Spinnertte Temp 592°F No Streaks
185	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=31A	Polymer B	270	66	Spinnertte Temp 601°F No Streaks
186	Heated Spinnertte Primary Current=32A	Polymer B	270	66	Spinnertte Temp 610°F Sign of Streaks (Fair)

TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
187	Heated Spinnerette Primary Current=0	Polymer B	300	66	
188	Recessed Spinnerette Current=0	Polymer B	295	50	Spinnerette Temp 204°C No Streak
189	Recessed Spinnerette Current=260A	Polymer B	282	50	Spinnerette Temp 299°C Sign of Streak
190	Recessed Spinnerette Current=260A	Polymer B	241	50	Spinnerette Temp 266°C No Streaks
191	Recessed Spinnerette Current=280A	Polymer B	241	50	Spinnerette Temp 283°C No Streaks
192	Recessed Spinnerette Current=330A	Polymer B	239	50	Spinnerette Temp 295°C No Streaks
193	Recessed Spinnerette Current=320A	Polymer B	260	50	Spinnerette Temp 295°C No Streaks
194	Recessed Spinnerette Current=340A	Polymer B	260	50	Spinnerette Temp 307°C No Streaks

TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
195	Recessed Spinnerette Current=370A	Polymer B	258	50	Spinnerette Temp 319°C Sign of Streaks (Poor)
196	Recessed Spinnerette Current=400A	Polymer B	260	50	Spinnerette Temp 349°C Sign of Streaks (Good)
197	Standard Spinnerette Current=0	Polymer B	260	50	Spinnerette Temp 211°C Sign of Streaks
198	Standard Spinnerette Current=0	Polymer B	280	50	Spinnerette Temp 229°C No Streaks
199	Standard spinnerette Current=300A	Polymer B	264	50	Spinnerette Temp 311°C Slight Streak (Fair)
200	Standard Spinnerette Current=330A	Polymer B	263	50	Spinnerette Temp 326°C Sign of Streak
201	Standard Spinnerette Current=385A	Polymer B	263	50	Spinnerette Temp 330°C Sign of Streaks (Good)
202	Standard Spinnerette Current=405A	Polymer B	262	50	Spinnerette Temp 353°C Slight Streak
203	Heated Spinnerette Current=49A	Polymer B	250	66	Spinnerette Temp 544°F

TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
204	Heated Spinnerette Current=55A	Polymer B	250	66	Spinnerette Temp 552°F
205	Heated Spinnerette Current=37A	Polymer B	250	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F
206	Heated Spinnerette Current=18.6A	Polymer B	258	65	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Picture New Spinnerette Design Requires Lower Current
207	Heated Spinnerette Current=18.6A	Polymer B	259	65	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Picture
208	Heated Spinnerette Current=18.4A	Polymer B	259	65	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Picture
209	Heated Spinnerette Current=18A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Picture
210	Heated Spinnerette Current=19.2A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Picture
211	Heated Spinnerette Current=19A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Picture

TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
212	Heated Spinnerette Current=19.2A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Picture
213	Heated Spinnerette Current=19.4A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Picture
214	Heated Spinnerette Current=19.6A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F Sign of Streak
215	Heated Spinnerette Current=20.8A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Streaks
216	Heated Spinnerette Current=20.8A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Picture
217	Heated Spinnerette Current=21A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Picture
218	Heated Spinnerette Current=21A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Picture
219	Heated Spinnerette Current=21.3A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Picture
220	Heated Spinnerette Current=21.7A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Picture

TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
221	Heated Spinnertette Current=21.8A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnertette Temp 572°F No Picture
222	Heated Spinnertette Current=22.5A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnertette Temp 572°F No Picture
223	Heated Spinnertette Current=22.5A	Polymer B	250	66	Spinnertette Temp 572°F No Streaks
224	Heated Spinnertette Current=23.1A	Polymer B	250	66	Spinnertette Temp 572°F No Streaks
225	Heated Spinnertette Current=23.5A	Polymer B	260	66	Spinnertette Temp 572°F No Picture
226	Heated Spinnertette Current=23.8A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnertette Temp 572°F No Picture
227	Heated Spinnertette Current=24.3A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnertette Temp 572°F No Picture
228	Heated Spinnertette Current=24.6A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnertette Temp 572°F No Picture
229	Heated Spinnertette Current=24.9A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnertette Temp 572°F No Picture

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TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
230	Heated Spinnerette Current=25.1A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Picture
231	Heated Spinnerette Current=24.4A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Pictures
232	Heated Spinnerette Current=23.3A	Polymer B	275	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F Some Sign of Streak
233	Heated Spinnerette Current=23.7A	Polymer B	264	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F Some Sign of Streaks
234	Heated Spinnerette Current=24.1A	Polymer B	267	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Pictures
235	Heated Spinnerette Current=24.3A	Polymer B	267	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Picture
236	Heated Spinnerette Current=25.6A	Polymer B	267	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Picture
237	Heated Spinnerette Current=24.6A	Polymer B	266	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Picture
238	Heated Spinnerette Current=25.2A	Polymer B	266	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Pictures

TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
239	Heated Spinnerette Current=25.4A	Polymer B	266	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Streaks
240	Heated Spinnerette Current=25A	Polymer B	266	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Pictures
241	Heated Spinnerette Current=23A	Polymer B	267	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Pictures
242	Heated Spinnerette Current=22.8A	Polymer B	268	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Pictures
243	Heated Spinnerette Current=22.4A	Polymer B	269	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F No Pictures
244	Heated Spinnerette Current=25.2A	Polymer B	268	66	Spinnerette Temp 572°F Sign of Streak
245	Heated Spinnerette Current=24A	Polymer B	269	66	Spinnerette Temp 315°C Sign of Streak (Fair)
246	Heated Spinnerette Current=24A	Polymer B	268	66	Spinnerette Temp 312°C Sign of Streak (Poor)
247	Heated Spinnerette Current=23.9	Polymer B	268	66	Spinnerette Temp 311°C Sign of Streak (Poor)

TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
248	Heated Spinnerette Current=23.4A	Polymer B	268	66	Spinnerette Temp 315°C No Streaks
249	Heated Spinnerette Current=23A	Polymer B	268	66	Spinnerette Temp 311°C No Pictures
250	Heated Spinnerette Current=23.3A	Polymer B	268	66	Spinnerette Temp 312°C Sign of Streaks (Fair)
251	Heated Spinnerette Current=22.6A	Polymer B	269	66	Spinnerette Temp 310°C Sign of Streaks (Good)
252	Heated Spinnerette Current=26.9A	Polymer B	269	66	Spinnerette Temp 330°C Sign of Streaks (Fair-to-Good)
253	Heated Spinnerette Current=26.6A	Polymer B	269	66	Spinnerette Temp 330°C Sign of Streaks (Fair to Good)
254	Heated Spinnerette Current=26.3A	Polymer B	268	66	Spinnerette Temp 330°C Sign of Streaks (Good)
255	Heated Spinnerette Current=26.2A	Polymer B	268	66	Spinnerette Temp 328°C No Streaks
256	Heated Spinnerette Current=25.6A	Polymer B	268	66	Spinnerette Temp 328°C Sign of Streaks (Good)

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TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
257	Heated Spinnerette Current=25.6A	Polymer B	268	66	Spinnerette Temp 329°C Sign of Streaks (Good)
258	Heated Spinnerette Current=25.7A	Polymer B	269	66	Spinnerette Temp 329°C Sign of Streaks (Fair)
259	Heated Spinnerette Current=25.1A	Polymer B	268	66	Spinnerette Temp 329°C Sign of Streaks (Fair)
260	Heated Spinnerette Current=25A	Polymer B	269	66	Spinnerette Temp 329°C Sign of Streaks (Fair)
261	Heated Spinnerette Current=25A	Polymer B	269	66	Spinnerette Temp 329°C Sign of Streaks (Fair)
262	Heated Spinnerette Current=28A	Polymer B	270	66	Spinnerette Temp 329°C Sign of Streaks (Fair)
263	Heated Spinnerette Current=24.4A	Polymer B	269	66	Spinnerette Temp 620°F Sign of Streaks (Fair)
264	Heated Spinnerette Current=23.1A	Polymer B	269	66	Spinnerette Temp 603°F No Pictures
265	Heated Spinnerette Current=26.9A	Polymer B	277	66	Spinnerette Temp 626°F Sign of Streaks (Fair)

TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
266	Heated Spinnerette Current=28A	Polymer B	277	66	Spinnerette Temp 626°F No Pictures
267	Heated Spinnerette Current=28A	Polymer B	277	66	Spinnerette Temp 626°F No Pictures
268	Heated Spinnerette Current=25.7A	Polymer B	260	66	Spinnerette Temp 603°F No Streaks
269	Heated Spinnerette Current=28.1A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 626°F No Pictures
270	Heated Spinnerette Current=30.6A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 644°F Sign of Streaks (Fair)
271	Heated Spinnerette Current=30.6A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 644°F No Picture
272	Heated Spinnerette Current=30.8A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 644°F No Picture
273	Heated Spinnerette Current=31.1A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 644°F No Picture
274	Heated Spinnerette Current=31.3A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 644°F No Picture

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TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
275	Heated Spinnerette Current=31.6A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 644°F No Picture
276	Heated Spinnerette Current=32.3A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 644°F No Picture
277	Heated Spinnerette Current=32.4A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 644°F No Picture
278	Heated Spinnerette Current=32.3A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 644°F No Picture
279	Heated Spinnerette Current=32.7A	Polymer B	259	66	Spinnerette Temp 644°F No Picture
280	Heated Spinnerette Current=33A	Polymer B	258	66	Spinnerette Temp 644°F No Picture
281	Heated Spinnerette Current=32A	Polymer B	249	66	Spinnerette Temp 644°F No Picture
282	Heated Spinnerette Current=32.5A	Polymer B	249	66	Spinnerette Temp 644°F No Picture
283	Heated Spinnerette Current=32.7A	Polymer B	240	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F No Picture

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TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
284	Heated Spinnerette Current=35.5A	Polymer B	240	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F No Picture
285	Heated Spinnerette Current=35.6A	Polymer B	240	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F No Picture
286	Heated Spinnerette Current=35.3A	Polymer B	250	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F No Picture
287	Heated Spinnerette Current=35.2A	Polymer B	250	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F No Picture
288	Heated Spinnerette Current=33.7A	Polymer B	249	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F No Picture
289	Heated Spinnerette Current=33.8A	Polymer B	250	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F No Picture
290	Heated Spinnerette Current=34.4A	Polymer B	249	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F No Picture
291	Heated Spinnerette Current=35.1A	Polymer B	250	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F No Picture
292	Heated Spinnerette Current=29.5A	Polymer B	237	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F No Picture

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TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
293	Heated Spinnerette Current=29.5A	Polymer B	237	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F No Picture
294	Heated Spinnerette Current=29.8A	Polymer B	237	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F No Picture
295	Heated Spinnerette Current=29.8A	Polymer B	238	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F Sign of Streak (Fair)
296	Heated Spinnerette Current=32.4A	Polymer B	240	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F No Picture
297	Heated Spinnerette Current=30.1A	Polymer B	240	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F No Picture
298	Heated Spinnerette Current=30.4A	Polymer B	240	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F No Picture
299	Heated Spinnerette Current=30.5A	Polymer B	239	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F No Picture
300	Heated Spinnerette Current=30.9A	Polymer B	239	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F No Picture
301	Heated Spinnerette Current=31.1A	Polymer B	239	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F No Picture

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TABLE I (continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
302	Heated Spinnerette Current=31.7A	Polymer B	239	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F No Picture
303	Heated Spinnerette Current=31.1A	Polymer B	239	66	Spinnerette Temp 642°F No Picture
304	Heated Spinnerette Current=33.3A	Polymer B	239	66	Spinnerette Temp 660°F No Picture
305	Heated Spinnerette Current=33.3A	Polymer B	239	66	Spinnerette Temp 660°F No Picture
306	Heated Spinnerette Current=33.5A	Polymer B	239	66	Spinnerette Temp 660°F No Picture
307	Heated Spinnerette Current=34A	Polymer B	239	66	Spinnerette Temp 660°F No Picture
308	Heated Spinnerette Current=33.8A	Polymer B	239	66	Spinnerette Temp 660°F No Picture
309	Heated Spinnerette Current=34.3A	Polymer B	239	66	Spinnerette Temp 660°F No Picture
310	Heated Spinnerette Current=33.9A	Polymer B	239	66	Spinnerette Temp 660°F No Picture

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TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
311	Heated Spinnerette Current=34.5A	Polymer B	239	66	Spinnerette Temp 660°F No Picture
312	Heated Spinnerette Current=24.6A	Polymer B	239	66	Spinnerette Temp 660°F No Picture
313	Heated Spinnerette Current=34.8A	Polymer B	239	66	Spinnerette Temp 660°F No Picture
314	Heated Spinnerette Current=299A	Polymer B Ni Octoate 700 ppm	290	100	Spinnerette Temp 660°C Excellent Streaks
315	Heated Spinnerette Current=334A	Polymer B Ni Octoate 700 ppm	289	100	Spinnerette Temp 300°C Excellent Streaks
316	Heated Spinnerette Current=358A	Polymer B Ni Octoate 700 ppm	290	100	Spinnerette Temp 330°C Excellent Streaks
317	Heated Spinnerette Current=358A	Polymer B Ni Octoate 700 ppm	270	100	Spinnerette Temp 350°C Excellent Streaks
318	Heated Spinnerette Current=345A	Polymer B Ni Octoate 700 ppm	270	100	Spinnerette Temp 300°C Excellent Streaks
319	Heated Spinnerette Current=362A	Polymer B Ni Octoate 700 ppm	270	100	Spinnerette Temp 350°C Excellent Streaks

TABLE I. (Continued).

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
320	Heated Spinnerette Current=327A	80% Polymer A 20% PE	270	100	Spinnerette Temp 300°C Excellent Streaks
321	Heated Spinnerette Current=351A	80% Polymer A 20% PE	270	100	Spinnerette Temp 320°C Excellent Streaks
322	Heated Spinnerette Current=347A	80% Polymer A 20% PE	255	100	Spinnerette Temp 300°C Excellent Streaks
323	Heated Spinnerette Current=361A	80% Polymer A 20% PE	258	100	Spinnerette Temp 320°C Excellent Streaks
324	Heated Spinnerette Current=369A	80% Polymer A 20% PE	250	100	Spinnerette Temp 330°C Excellent Streaks
325	Heated Spinnerette Current=337A	90% Polymer A 10% Poly-ester	270	100	Spinnerette Temp 300°C Excellent Streaks
326	Heated Spinnerette Current=358A	Polymer A 10% Poly-ester	270	100	Spinnerette Temp 330°C Excellent Streaks

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TABLE I (Continued)

EXAMPLE NO.	HEATING CONDITIONS	POLYMER	MELT TEMPERATURE (°C)	SPIN SPEED meters/min.	RESULTS
327	Heated Spinnertte Current=355A	Polymer A 10% Poly-ester	250	100	Spinnertte Temp 315°C Excellent Streaks
328	Heated Spinnertte Current=350A	Polymer A 10% Poly-ester	250	100	Spinnertte Temp 310°C Excellent Streaks
329	Heated Spinnertte Current=331A	Polymer A 10% Poly-ester	270	100	Spinnertte Temp 300°C Excellent Streaks
330	Heated Spinnertte Current=337A	Polymer A 10% Poly-ester	248	100	Spinnertte Temp 300°C Excellent Streaks
331	Heated Spinnertte Current=351A	Polymer A 10% Poly-ester	250	100	Spinnertte Temp 320°C Excellent Streaks

making staple fiber, these processes include the older two-step "long spin" process and the newer one-step "short spin" process. The long spin process involves first melt-extruding fibers at typical spinning speeds of 500 to 3000 meters per minute, and more usually depending on the polymer to be spun from 500 to 1500 meters per minute. Additionally, in a second step usually run at 100 to 250 meters per minute, these fibers are drawn, crimped, and cut into staple fiber. The

one-step short spin process involves conversion from polymer to staple fibers in a single step where typical spinning speeds are in the range of 50 to 200 meters per minute. The productivity of the one-step process is increased with the use of about 5 to 20 times the number of capillaries in the spinnerette compared to that typically used in the long spin process. For example, spinnerettes for a typical commercial "long spin" process would include approximately 50-4,000, 5 preferably approximately 3,000-3,500 capillaries, and spinnerettes for a typical commercial "short spin" process would include approximately 500 to 100,000 capillaries preferably, about 30,000-70,000 capillaries. Typical temperatures for extrusion of the spin melt in these processes are about 250-325°C. Moreover, for processes wherein bicomponent filaments are being produced, the numbers of capillaries refers to the number of filaments being extruded, and usually not the number of capillaries in the spinnerette:

10 [0112] The short spin process for manufacture of polypropylene fiber is significantly different from the conventional long spin process in terms of the quenching conditions needed for spin continuity. In the short spin process, with high hole density spinnerettes spinning around 100 meters/minute, quench air velocity is required in the range of about 3,000-8,000 ft/minute (900 - 2500 m/min) to complete fiber quenching within one inch (25.4 mm) below the spinnerette face. To the contrary, in the long spin process, with spinning speeds of about 1000-1500 meters/minute, a lower quench 15 air velocity in the range of 300 to 500 ft./minute (90 - 160 m/min) is used. Therefore, achieving a skin-core type fiber, such as that disclosed in the above-identified Kozulla applications (which controls quenching to achieve a delayed quenching) is difficult in a short spin process due surrounding the inner core, the surface zone comprising oxidative chain scission degraded polymeric material, so that the inner core and the surface zone comprise a skin-core structure; and the inner core has a melt flow rate substantially equal to an average melt flow rate of the inner core and the surface 20 zone.

25 [0113] It is also an object of the present invention to provide non-woven materials comprising fibers according to the invention thermally bonded together, as well as to provide hygienic products comprising at least one absorbent layer, and at least one non-woven fabric comprising fibers of the present invention thermally bonded together. The hygienic article can comprise a diaper having an outer impermeable layer, an inner non-woven fabric layer, and an intermediate layer. Such hygienic products are disclosed in the above-referenced Kozulla and Gupta et al. patent specifications.

30 [0114] In general, in the processes according to the present invention the polymeric composition comprises a polyolefin.

35 [0115] In general, the apparatus according to the present invention is such that (i) said means for heating comprise at least one apertured element positioned upstream of said at least one spinnerette, and/or (ii) at least one spinnerette is provided which is substantially uniformly heated by direct resistance or impedance of that spinnerette, and/or (iii) the means for feeding the polymer through the spinnerette are capable of obtaining a spinning speed of about 10 to 200 meters per minute, and/or (iv) the said spinnerette, the said means for feeding the polymer composition and the said quenching means are arranged for a short-spin process.

40 [0116] In general, the fibers and filaments according to the present invention are such that the polymeric material comprises a polyolefin.

45 [0117] The polymeric material in each of the above fibers or filaments can comprise various polyolefins. For example, polyolefins can comprise polyethylenes, such as low density polyethylenes, high density polyethylenes, and linear low density polyethylenes, including polyethylenes prepared by copolymerizing ethylene with at least one C₃-C₁₂ alpha-olefin; polypropylenes, such as atactic, syndiotactic, and isotactic polypropylene - including partially and fully isotactic, or at least substantially fully isotactic - polypropylenes; polybutenes; such as poly-1-butenes, poly-2-butenes, and polyisobutylenes, and poly 4-methyl-1-pentenes. Preferably, the polymeric material comprises polypropylene, and, preferably, the inner core of the fiber or filament has a melt flow rate of about 10, and the average melt flow rate of the fiber or filament is about 11 or about 12.

50 [0118] In the process and apparatus of the present invention,

55 [0119] The heating of the apertured plate can be to a temperature of at least about 250°C, and can be in the range of about 250°C to 370°C, preferably in the range of about 280°C to 350°C, and more preferably in the range of about 300°C to 360°C.

60 [0120] The quenching can comprise any quench with an oxidative gas that flows at a high rate of speed, preferably about 3,000 to 12,000 ft/min (900 - 4000 m/min), more preferably about 4,000 to 9,000 ft/min (1200 - 2800 m/min) and even more preferably 5,000 to 7,000 ft/min (1500 - 2100 m/min). Preferably, the molten filaments are immediately quenched upon being extruded. Examples of quenching according to the present invention include radial quenching and quenching with adjustable nozzles blowing an oxidative gas. The adjustable nozzles are preferably directed at a central portion of the spinnerette, and preferably have an angle of about 0° to 60° with respect to a plane passing through the surface of the spinnerette, more preferably about 10° to 60°, and can also preferably be an angle of about 0° to 45°, more preferably 0° to 25°.

65 [0121] The heating can be accomplished using conduction, convection, induction, magnetic heating and/or radiation, and can be accomplished using impedance or resistance heating, inductance heating and/or magnetic heating.

70 [0122] The polymer composition can comprise various spinnable polyolefins, such as polyethylene and polypropylene.

ene. The polymer can have usual spinning temperatures temperature, i.e., the polymer melt temperature, and a narrow or broad molecular weight distribution. For polypropylene, the temperature of the melt spin composition is about 200°C to 300°C, preferably 220°C to 260°C, and more preferably 230°C to 240°C, the melt flow rate is preferably about 0.5 to 40 dg/min, with preferred ranges being 5-25 dg/min, 10-20 dg/min, 9-20 dg/min and 9-15 dg/min. preferably, the polypropylene composition has a broad molecular weight distribution of at least about 4.5. Moreover, polymer compositions as disclosed in either the Kozulla or Gupta et al. patent specifications referred to above can be utilized in the present invention. For example, temperature reduced rapidly to 145°C. The sample is then examined through a suitable microscope, such as a Nikon SK-E trinocular polarizing microscope, and a photograph of a representative area is taken to obtain a still photo reproduction using, for example, a MTI-NC70 video camera equipped with a Pasecon videotube and a Sony Up-850 B/W videographic printer. A rating of "good" is used when the majority of fibers leave residues. A rating of "poor" is used when only a few percent of the fibers leave residues. Other comparative ratings are also available, and include a rating of "fair" which falls between "good" and "poor", a rating of "very good" which is positioned above "good", and a rating of "none" which, of course, falls below "poor".

[0123] The polymer material extruded into a skin-core filament structure can comprise any polyolefin that can be extruded in a long spin or short spin process to directly produce the skin-core structure in the filaments as they are formed at the exit of the spinnerette. For example, polyolefins can comprise polyethylenes, such as low density polyethylenes, high density polyethylenes, and linear low density polyethylenes, including polyethylenes prepared by copolymerizing ethylene with at least one C₃-C₁₂ alpha-olefin; polypropylenes, such as atactic, syndiotactic, and isotactic polypropylene - including partially and fully isotactic, or at least substantially fully isotactic - polypropylenes, polybutenes, such as poly-1-butenes, poly-2-butenes, and polyisobutylenes, and poly 4-methyl-1-pentenes

[0124] A polymer material to be extruded is a polymer material for the production of polyolefin fibers, preferably polypropylene fibers. Therefore, the composition to be extruded into filaments comprises an olefinic polymer, and preferably polypropylene.

[0125] The polymeric compositions to be extruded can comprise

25 Claims

1. A process for spinning polymer filaments, comprising:

30 feeding a polymer composition to at least one spinnerette, the said polymer composition comprising a polyolefin;
heating the polymer composition at a location at or adjacent to the at least one spinnerette so as to obtain sufficient heating of the polymer composition to partially degrade the polymer composition in a vicinity of the at least one spinnerette;
35 extruding the partially degraded polymer composition through the at least one spinnerette to form molten filaments; and
immediately quenching the molten filaments in an oxidative atmosphere, as the molten filaments are extruded, to effect oxidative chain scission degradation of at least a surface of the molten filaments to obtain filaments having a skin-core structure.

40 2. A process for spinning polymer filaments, comprising:

feeding a polymer composition to at least one spinnerette, the said polymer composition comprising a polyolefin;
45 heating the polymer composition at a location at or adjacent to the at least one spinnerette so as to heat the polymer composition to a sufficient temperature to obtain a skin-core filament structure upon quenching in an oxidative atmosphere;
extruding the heated polymer composition through the at least one spinnerette to form molten filaments; and
50 quenching the molten filaments in an oxidative atmosphere, as the molten filaments are extruded, to effect oxidative chain scission degradation of at least a surface of the molten filaments to obtain filaments having a skin-core structure.

55 3. The process according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the heating the polymer composition comprises heating to a temperature of at least about 200°C.

4. The process according to claim 3, wherein the heating the polymer composition comprises heating to a temperature of at least about 220°C.

5. The process according to claim 4, wherein the heating the polymer composition comprises heating to a temperature of at least about 250°C.
6. The process according to any one of claims 3-5, wherein the extruding comprises extruding heated polymer composition having a temperature of at least about 200°C.
- 5 7. The process according to claim 6, wherein the extruding comprises extruding heated polymer composition having a temperature of at least about 220°C.
- 10 8. The process according to claim 7, wherein the extruding comprises extruding heated polymer composition having a temperature of at least about 250°C.
9. The process according to any one of claims 2-8, wherein the molten filaments are immediately quenched.
- 15 10. The process according to any one of claims 2-9, wherein the heating comprises heating the at least one spinnerette.
11. The process according to claim 10, wherein the heating comprises directly heating the at least one spinnerette.
- 20 12. The process according to claim 11, wherein the at least one spinnerette is heated to a temperature of at least about 230°C.
13. The process according to claim 12, wherein the at least one spinnerette is heated to a temperature of at least about 250°C.
- 25 14. The process according to any one of claims 2-9, wherein the heating comprises positioning at least one heated apertured element upstream of the at least one spinnerette.
15. The process according to claim 14, wherein the at least one apertured element comprises at least one apertured plate.
- 30 16. The process according to claim 15, wherein the at least one heated apertured plate is heated to a temperature of at least about 250°C.
17. The process according to claim 16, wherein the at least one apertured plate is positioned about 1 to 4 mm upstream of the at least one spinnerette.
- 35 18. The process according to claim 17, wherein the at least one apertured element is positioned about 2 to 3 mm upstream of the at least one spinnerette.
19. The process according to claim 18, wherein the at least one apertured element is positioned about 2.5 mm upstream of the at least one spinnerette.
- 40 20. The process according to any one of claim 15-19, wherein the at least one apertured plate and the at least one spinnerette comprise a corresponding number of capillaries and pattern.
21. The process according to any one of claim 15-19, wherein capillaries in the at least one apertured plate comprise a cross-sectional area that is up to about 30% larger than a cross-sectional area of capillaries in the at least one spinnerette.
- 50 22. The process according to any one of claim 1-21, wherein the at least one spinnerette comprises 500 to 150,000 capillaries having a countersunk, counterbored, or counterbored and countersunk capillaries, optionally including a lower recess.
23. The process according to any one of claim 1-22, wherein the quenching comprises a radial quench.
- 55 24. The process according to any one of claim 1-22, wherein the quenching comprises blowing an oxidative gas through at least one nozzle.

25. The process according to any one of claim 23 or 24, wherein the radial quench comprises an oxidative gas having a flow rate of about 3,000 to 12,000 ft/min (900 - 3600 m/min).

5 26. The process according to any one of claim 1-25, wherein the heating comprises at least one of heating with conduction, convection, induction, magnetic and radiation.

27. The process according to any one of claim 1-26, wherein the spinning speed is about 10 to 200 meters per minute.

10 28. The process according to any one of claim 27, wherein the spinning speed is about 80 to 100 meters per minute.

29. The process according to any one of claim 1-28, wherein the polymer composition comprises a polypropylene composition.

15 30. The process according to claim 29, wherein the polypropylene composition has a melt flow rate of about 0.5 to 40 dg/min.

31. The process according to claim 29, wherein the polypropylene composition has a broad molecular weight distribution.

20 32. The process according to claim 31, wherein the molecular weight distribution of the polypropylene composition is at least about 4.5.

33. The process according to any one of claims 1-32, wherein the polymer composition includes at least one agent which lowers surface fusion temperature of polymer materials.

25 34. The process according to claim 33, wherein the at least one agent which lowers surface fusion temperature of polymer materials comprises at least one metal carboxylate.

35. The process according to claim 34, wherein the at least one metal carboxylate comprises at least one member selected from the group consisting of nickel salts of 2-ethylhexanoic, caprylic, decanoic and dodecanoic acids, and 2-ethylhexanoates of Fe, Co, Ca and Ba.

36. The process according to any one of claims 1-55, wherein the molten filaments are quenched in an oxidative atmosphere so as to effect oxidative chain scission degradation of at least a surface of the molten filaments to obtain filaments having a skin-core structure capable of forming non-woven materials having a cross directional strength of at least 650 g/in (12.5 N/5 cm) for a 20 g/yd² (24 g/m²) fabric bonded at speeds of at least 250 ft/min (76 m/min).

40 37. Apparatus for spinning polymer filaments, comprising:

45 at least one spinnerette;
means for feeding a polymer composition through said at least one spinnerette to extrude molten filaments;
means for substantially uniformly heating the polymer composition at a location at or adjacent to said at least one spinnerette so as to obtain sufficient heating of the polymer composition to partially degrade the polymer composition in a vicinity of said at least one spinnerette; and
means for immediately quenching molten filaments of extruded polymer in an oxidative atmosphere, as the molten filaments exit said at least one spinnerette, so as to effect oxidative chain scission degradation of at least a surface of the molten filaments,
wherein

50 (i) said means for heating comprise at least one apertured element positioned upstream of said at least one spinnerette, and/or
(ii) at least one spinnerette is provided which is substantially uniformly heated by direct resistance or impedance of that spinnerette, and/or
55 (iii) the means for feeding the polymer through the spinnerette are capable of obtaining a spinning speed of about 10 to 200 meters per minute, and/or
(iv) the said spinnerette, the said means for feeding the polymer composition and the said quenching means are arranged for a short-spin process.

38. Apparatus for spinning polymer filaments, comprising:

at least one spinnerette;
 means for feeding a polymer composition through said at least one spinnerette to extrude molten filaments;
 5 means for heating the polymer composition at a location at or adjacent to said at least one spinnerette to obtain sufficient heating of the polymer composition to obtain a skin-core filament structure upon quenching in an oxidative atmosphere; and
 means for quenching molten filaments of extruded polymer in an oxidative atmosphere, as the molten filaments
 10 exit said at least one spinnerette, to effect oxidative chain scission degradation of at least a surface of the molten filaments to obtain filaments having a skin-core structure,
 wherein
 (i) said means for heating comprise at least one apertured element positioned upstream of said at least one spinnerette, and/or
 15 (ii) at least one spinnerette is provided which is substantially uniformly heated by direct resistance or impedance of that spinnerette, and/or
 (iii) the means for feeding the polymer through the spinnerette are capable of obtaining a spinning speed of about 10 to 200 meters per minute, and/or
 (iv) the said spinnerette, the said means for feeding the polymer composition and the said quenching
 20 means are arranged for a short-spin process.

39. The apparatus according to claim 38 which comprises means for immediately quenching the molten filaments as they exit the said spinnerette.

25 40. The apparatus according to any one of claims 37 to 39, wherein said means for heating comprise elements for substantially uniformly heating said at least one spinnerette to a temperature of at least about 230°C.

41. The apparatus according to claim 40, wherein said means for heating comprise elements for substantially uniformly heating said at least one spinnerette to a temperature of at least about 250°C.

30 42. The apparatus according to claim 40, wherein said means for heating comprise elements for substantially uniformly heating said at least one spinnerette to a temperature of about 230°C to 370°C.

43. The apparatus according to any one of claims 37 to 39, wherein said means for heating comprise at least one heated apertured plate positioned upstream of said at least one spinnerette.

35 44. The apparatus according to claim 43, wherein said means for heating comprise elements for heating said at least one heated apertured plate to a temperature of at least about 250°C.

40 45. The apparatus according to claim 44, wherein said means for heating comprise elements for heating said at least one heated apertured plate to a temperature of about 250°C to 370°C.

46. The apparatus according to claim 45, wherein said means for heating comprise elements for heating said at least one heated apertured plate to a temperature of about 280°C to 350°C.

45 47. The apparatus according to claim 46, wherein said means for heating comprise elements for heating said at least one heated apertured plate to a temperature of about 300°C to 350°C.

48. The apparatus according to any one of claims 43-47, wherein said at least one heated apertured plate is positioned about 1 to 4 mm upstream of said at least one spinnerette.

50 49. The apparatus according to claim 48, wherein said at least one heated apertured plate is positioned about 2 to 3 mm upstream of said at least one spinnerette.

55 50. The apparatus according to claim 49, wherein said at least one heated apertured plate is positioned about 2.5 mm upstream of said at least one spinnerette.

51. The apparatus according to any one of claims 43-50, wherein said at least one heated apertured plate and said at

least one spinnerette comprise a corresponding number of capillaries and pattern.

52. The apparatus according to any one of claims 43-51, wherein capillaries in said at least one heated apertured plate comprise a cross-sectional area that is up to about 30% larger than a cross-sectional area of capillaries in said at least one spinnerette.

53. The apparatus according to any one of claims 37-52, wherein the at least one spinnerette comprises 500 to 150,000 capillaries having a countersunk, counterbored, or counterbored and countersunk capillaries, optionally including a lower recess.

10 54. The apparatus according to any one of claims 37-53 wherein said means for quenching comprise means for radial quenching.

15 55. The apparatus according to any one of claims 37-54 wherein said means for quenching comprise means for blowing an oxidative gas through at least one nozzle.

56. The apparatus according to claim 54, wherein said means for radial quenching comprise means for effecting flow of an oxidative gas at a flow rate of about 3,000 to 12,000 ft/min (900 to 3600 m/min).

20 57. The apparatus according to any one of claims 37-56 including an additional means for heating the polymer composition to a temperature of about 200°C to 300°C prior to the polymer composition reaching said means for heating.

58. The apparatus according to any one of claims 37-57, wherein said means for heating comprise elements for heating by at least one of heating by conduction, convection, induction, magnetic and radiation.

25 59. The apparatus according to any one of claims 37-58, wherein said means for feeding a polymer composition to said at least one spinnerette is capable of obtaining a spinning speed of about 10 to 200 meters per minute through said at least one spinnerette.

30 60. The apparatus according to claim 59, wherein said means for feeding a polymer composition to said at least one spinnerette is capable of obtaining a spinning speed of about 80 to 100 meters per minute through said at least one spinnerette.

61. A fiber or filament, comprising:

35 an inner core of polymeric material;
a surface zone surrounding said inner core, said surface zone comprising a concentration of oxidative chain scission degraded polymeric material, so that said inner core and said surface zone comprise a skin-core structure; and

40 said oxidative chain scission degraded polymeric material being substantially limited to said surface zone, wherein said inner core and said surface zone comprise adjacent discrete portions of said skin core structure, wherein the polymeric material comprises a polyolefin.

62. A fiber or filament, comprising:

45 an inner core of polymeric material;
a surface zone having a thickness of at least about 0.5 µm surrounding said inner core, said surface zone comprising a concentration of oxidative chain scission degraded polymeric material, so that said inner core and said surface zone comprise a skin-core structure; and

50 said oxidative chain scission degraded polymeric material being substantially limited to said surface zone, wherein said inner core and said surface zone comprise adjacent discrete portions of said skin-core structure, wherein the polymeric material comprises a polyolefin.

63. A fiber or filament, comprising:

55 an inner core of polymeric material;
a surface zone surrounding said inner core, said surface zone comprising a high concentration of oxidative chain scission degraded polymeric material, so that said inner core and said surface zone comprise a skin-core

structure; and
 said inner core has a melt flow rate substantially equal to an average melt flow rate of said inner core and said surface zone,
 wherein the polymeric material comprises a polyolefin.

5 64. The fiber or filament according to claim 61, 62 or 63 wherein said polymeric material comprises at least one of polyethylene or polypropylene.

10 65. The fiber or filament according to claim 64, wherein said polymeric material in said inner core and said surface zone comprises polypropylene.

15 66. The fiber or filament according to claim 65, wherein said inner core has a melt flow rate of about 10, and said average melt flow rate is about 11.

20 67. The fiber or filament according to any one of claims 61-66, wherein said surface zone has a thickness of at least about 1 μm .

25 68. A non-woven material comprising fibers according to any one of claims 61-67 thermally bonded together.

30 69. A hygienic product comprising at least one absorbent layer, and at least one non-woven fabric comprising fibers according to any one of claims 61-67 thermally bonded together.

35 70. A hygienic product according to claim 69, comprising a diaper comprising an outer impermeable layer, an inner non-woven fabric layer, and an intermediate absorbent layer.

25 **Patentansprüche**

1. Verfahren zum Spinnen von Polymer-Filamenten, umfassend:

30 Zuführen einer Polymerzusammensetzung zu wenigstens einer Spindüse, wobei die Polymerzusammensetzung ein Polyolefin umfaßt;
 Erwärmen der Polymerzusammensetzung an einer Stelle an der oder benachbart zur wenigstens einen Spindüse, um ausreichendes Erwärmen der Polymerzusammensetzung zum teilweisen Abbau der Polymerzusammensetzung in einer Umgebung der wenigstens einen Spindüse zu erhalten;
 Extrudieren der teilweise abgebauten Polymerzusammensetzung durch die wenigstens eine Spindüse zur Bildung geschmolzener Filamente; und

40 unverzügliches Abschrecken der geschmolzenen Filamente in einer oxidativen Atmosphäre, sobald die geschmolzenen Filamente extrudiert sind, um einen oxidativen Kettenspaltungsabbau wenigstens einer Oberfläche der geschmolzenen Filamente zu bewirken, um Filamente mit einer Kern-Mantel-Struktur zu erhalten.

2. Verfahren zum Spinnen von Polymer-Filamenten, umfassend:

45 Zuführen einer Polymerzusammensetzung zu wenigstens einer Spindüse, wobei die Polymerzusammensetzung ein Polyolefin umfaßt;
 Erwärmen der Polymerzusammensetzung an einer Stelle an der oder benachbart zur wenigstens einen Spindüse, um die Polymerzusammensetzung auf eine ausreichende Temperatur zu erwärmen, um eine Kern-Mantel-Filamentstruktur beim Abschrecken in einer oxidativen Atmosphäre zu erhalten;
 Extrudieren der erwärmten Polymerzusammensetzung durch die wenigstens eine Spindüse zur Bildung geschmolzener Filamente; und

55 Abschrecken der geschmolzenen Filamente in einer oxidativen Atmosphäre, sobald die geschmolzenen Filamente extrudiert sind, um einen oxidativen Kettenspaltungsabbau wenigstens einer Oberfläche der geschmolzenen Filamente zum Erhalt von Filamenten mit einer Kern-Mantel-Struktur zu bewirken.

3. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 1 oder 2, worin das Erwärmen der Polymerzusammensetzung das Erwärmen auf eine Temperatur von wenigstens ca. 200°C umfaßt.
4. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 3, worin das Erwärmen der Polymerzusammensetzung das Erwärmen auf eine Temperatur von wenigstens ca. 220°C umfaßt.
5. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 4, worin das Erwärmen der Polymerzusammensetzung das Erwärmen auf eine Temperatur von wenigstens ca. 250°C umfaßt.
10. 6. Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 3 bis 5, worin das Extrudieren das Extrudieren der erwärmten Polymerzusammensetzung mit einer Temperatur von wenigstens ca. 200°C umfaßt.
15. 7. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 6, worin das Extrudieren das Extrudieren der erwärmten Polymerzusammensetzung mit einer Temperatur von wenigstens ca. 220°C umfaßt.
16. 8. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 7, worin das Extrudieren das Extrudieren der erwärmten Polymerzusammensetzung mit einer Temperatur von wenigstens ca. 250°C umfaßt.
20. 9. Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 2 bis 8, worin die geschmolzenen Filamente unverzüglich abgeschreckt werden.
10. 10. Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 2 bis 9, worin das Erwärmen das Erwärmen der wenigstens einen Spindüse umfaßt.
25. 11. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 10, worin das Erwärmen das direkte Erwärmen der wenigstens einen Spinndüse umfaßt.
12. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 11, worin die wenigstens eine Spinndüse auf eine Temperatur von wenigstens ca. 230°C erwärmt wird.
30. 13. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 12, worin die wenigstens eine Spinndüse auf eine Temperatur von wenigstens ca. 250°C erwärmt wird.
14. Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 2 bis 9, worin das Erwärmen das Anordnen wenigstens eines beheizten, mit Löchern versehenen Elements stromaufwärts der wenigstens einen Spinndüse umfaßt.
35. 15. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 14, worin das wenigstens eine, mit Löchern versehene Element wenigstens eine mit Löchern versehene Scheibe umfaßt.
40. 16. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 15, worin die wenigstens eine beheizte, mit Löchern versehene Scheibe auf eine Temperatur von wenigstens ca. 250°C erwärmt wird.
17. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 16, worin die wenigstens eine, mit Löchern versehene Scheibe ca. 1 bis 4 mm stromaufwärts der wenigstens einen Spinndüse angeordnet wird.
45. 18. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 17, worin das wenigstens eine, mit Löchern versehene Element ca. 2 bis 3 mm stromaufwärts der wenigstens einen Spinndüse angeordnet wird.
19. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 18, worin das wenigstens eine, mit Löchern versehene Element ca. 2,5 mm stromaufwärts der wenigstens einen Spinndüse angeordnet wird.
50. 20. Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 15 bis 19, worin die wenigstens eine, mit Löchern versehene Scheibe und die wenigstens eine Spinndüse eine entsprechende Anzahl von Kapillaren und ein entsprechendes Muster umfassen.
55. 21. Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 15 bis 19, worin die Kapillaren in der wenigstens einen, mit Löchern versehenen Scheibe eine Querschnittsfläche umfassen, die bis zu ca. 30 % größer ist als die Querschnittsfläche der Kapillaren in der wenigstens einen Spinndüse.

22. Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 21, worin die wenigstens eine Spinndüse 500 bis 150 000 Kapillaren mit eingelassenen, angesenkten oder eingelassenen und angesenkten Kapillaren umfaßt, gegebenenfalls einschließlich einer unteren Vertiefung.

5 23. Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 22, worin das Abschrecken eine radiale Abschreckung umfaßt.

24. Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 22, worin das Abschrecken das Blasen eines oxidativen Gases durch wenigstens eine Düse umfaßt.

10 25. Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 23 oder 24, worin die radiale Abschreckung ein oxidatives Gas mit einer Fließgeschwindigkeit von ca. 3 000 bis 12 000 ft/min (900 bis 3 600 m/min) umfaßt.

26. Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 25, worin das Erwärmen wenigstens eines aus Erwärmen mit Leistung, Konvektion, Hochfrequenz, magnetisches und Strahlung umfaßt.

15 27. Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 26, worin die Spinngeschwindigkeit ca. 10 bis 200 m/min beträgt.

28. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 27, worin die Spinngeschwindigkeit ca. 80 bis 100 m/min beträgt.

20 29. Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 28, worin die Polymerzusammensetzung eine Polypropylenzusammensetzung umfaßt.

30. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 29, worin die Polypropylenzusammensetzung eine Schmelzflußrate von ca. 0,5 bis 40 dg/min besitzt.

25 31. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 29, worin die Polypropylenzusammensetzung eine breite Molekulargewichtsverteilung besitzt.

32. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 31, worin die Molekulargewichtsverteilung der Polypropylenzusammensetzung wenigstens ca. 4,5 ist.

30 33. Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 32, worin die Polymerzusammensetzung wenigstens ein Mittel einschließt, das die Oberflächenschmelztemperatur der Polymermaterialien erniedrigt.

35 34. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 33, worin das wenigstens eine Mittel, das die Oberflächenschmelztemperatur der Polymermaterialien erniedrigt, wenigstens ein Metallcarboxylat umfaßt.

35 35. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 34, worin das wenigstens eine Metallcarboxylat wenigstens einen Vertreter umfaßt, ausgewählt aus der Gruppe, die aus Nickelsalzen von 2-Ethylhexansäure, Caprylsäure, Decansäure und Dodecansäure und 2-Ethylhexanoaten von Fe, Co, Ca und Ba besteht.

40 36. Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 35, worin die geschmolzenen Filamente in einer oxidativen Atmosphäre abgeschreckt werden, um einen oxidativen Kettenspaltungsabbau wenigstens einer Oberfläche der geschmolzenen Filamente zum Erhalt von Filamenten mit einer Kern-Mantel-Struktur zu bewirken, welche Vliesmaterialien mit einer Festigkeit in Querrichtung von wenigstens 650 g/in (12 bis 5 N/5 cm) für ein bei Geschwindigkeiten von wenigstens 250 ft/min (76 m/min) bondiertes Gewebe mit 20 g/yd² (24 g/m²) bilden können.

45 37. Vorrichtung zum Spinnen von Polymerfilamenten, umfassend:

50 wenigstens eine Spinndüse;

 Mittel zum Zuführen einer Polymerzusammensetzung durch die wenigstens eine Spinndüse zur Extrusion geschmolzener Filamente;

55 Mittel zum im wesentlichen gleichförmigen Erwärmen der Polymerzusammensetzung an einer Stelle an der oder benachbart zur wenigstens einen Spinndüse, um ein ausreichendes Erwärmen der Polymerzusammensetzung zum teilweisen Abbau der Polymerzusammensetzung in einer Umgebung der wenigstens einen Spinndüse zu erhalten; und

Mittel zum unverzüglichen Abschrecken geschmolzener Filamente aus extrudiertem Polymer in einer oxidativen Atmosphäre, sobald die geschmolzenen Filamente die wenigstens eine Spinndüse verlassen, um einen oxidativen Kettenabbau wenigstens einer Oberfläche der geschmolzenen Filamente zu bewirken, worin

5 (i) die Mittel zum Erwärmen wenigstens ein mit Löchern versehenes Element umfassen, das stromaufwärts der wenigstens einen Spinndüse angeordnet ist, und/oder

10 (ii) wenigstens eine Spinndüse bereitgestellt ist, die im wesentlichen gleichförmig durch den direkten Widerstand oder die Impedanz der Spinndüse beheizt wird, und/oder

(iii) die Mittel zur Zufuhr des Polymers durch die Spinndüse zum Erhalt einer Spinngeschwindigkeit von ca. 10 bis 200 m/min fähig sind.

15 38. Vorrichtung zum Spinnen von Polymer-Filamenten, umfassend:

wenigstens eine Spinndüse;

20 Mittel zur Zufuhr einer Polymerzusammensetzung durch die wenigstens eines Spinndüse zur Extrusion geschmolzener Filamente;

25 Mittel zum Erwärmen der Polymerzusammensetzung an einer Stelle an der oder benachbart zur wenigstens einen Spinndüse, um ein ausreichendes Erwärmen der Polymerzusammensetzung zum Erhalt einer Kern-Mantel-Filamentstruktur beim Abschrecken in einer oxidativen Atmosphäre zu erhalten; und

30 Mittel zum Abschrecken geschmolzener Filamente aus extrudiertem Polymer in einer oxidativen Atmosphäre, sobald die geschmolzenen Filamente die wenigstens eine Spinndüse verlassen, um einen oxidativen Kettenabbau wenigstens einer Oberfläche der geschmolzenen Filamente zum Erhalt von Filamenten mit einer Kern-Mantel-Struktur zu bewirken, worin

35 (i) die Mittel zum Erwärmen wenigstens ein mit Löchern versehenes Element umfassen, das stromaufwärts der wenigstens einen Spinndüse angeordnet ist, und /oder

(ii) wenigstens eine Spinndüse bereitgestellt ist, die im wesentlichen gleichförmig durch den direkten Widerstand oder die Impedanz der Spinndüse beheizt wird, und/oder

(iii) die Mittel zur Zufuhr des Polymers durch die Spinndüse zum Erhalt einer Spinngeschwindigkeit von ca. 10 bis 200 m/min fähig sind.

40 39. Vorrichtung gemäß Anspruch 38, die Mittel zum unverzüglichen Abschrecken der geschmolzenen Filamente umfaßt, sobald sie die Spinndüse verlassen.

40. Vorrichtung gemäß einem der Ansprüche 37 bis 39, worin die Mittel zum Erwärmen Elemente zum im wesentlichen gleichförmigen Erwärmen der wenigstens einen Spinndüse auf eine Temperatur von wenigstens ca. 230°C umfassen.

41. Gemäß Anspruch 40, worin die Mittel zum Erwärmen Elemente zum im wesentlichen gleichförmigen Erwärmen der wenigstens einen Spinndüse auf eine Temperatur von wenigstens ca. 250°C umfassen.

50 42. Vorrichtung gemäß Anspruch 40, worin die Mittel zum Erwärmen Elemente zum im wesentlichen gleichförmigen Erwärmen der wenigstens einen Spinndüse auf eine Temperatur von ca. 230 bis 370°C umfassen.

43. Vorrichtung gemäß einem der Ansprüche 37 bis 39, worin die Mittel zum Erwärmen wenigstens eine beheizte, mit Löchern versehene Scheibe umfassen, die stromaufwärts der wenigstens einen Spinndüse angeordnet ist.

55 44. Vorrichtung gemäß Anspruch 43, worin die Mittel zum Erwärmen Elemente zum Erwärmen der wenigstens einen beheizten, mit Löchern versehenen Scheibe auf eine Temperatur von wenigstens ca. 250°C umfassen.

45. Vorrichtung gemäß Anspruch 44, worin die Mittel zum Erwärmen Elemente zum Erwärmen der wenigstens einen beheizten, mit Löchern versehenen Scheibe auf eine Temperatur von ca. 250 bis 370°C umfassen.

5 46. Vorrichtung gemäß Anspruch 45, worin die Mittel zum Erwärmen Elemente zum Erwärmen der wenigstens einen beheizten, mit Löchern versehenen Scheibe auf eine Temperatur von ca. 280 bis 350°C umfassen.

47. Vorrichtung gemäß Anspruch 46, worin die Mittel zum Erwärmen Elemente zum Erwärmen der wenigstens einen beheizten, mit Löchern versehenen Scheibe auf eine Temperatur von ca. 300 bis 350°C umfassen.

10 48. Vorrichtung gemäß einem der Ansprüche 43 bis 47, worin die wenigstens eine beheizte, mit Löchern versehene Scheibe ca. 1 bis 4 mm stromaufwärts der wenigstens einen Spinndüse angeordnet ist.

49. Vorrichtung gemäß Anspruch 48, worin die wenigstens eine beheizte, mit Löchern versehene Scheibe ca. 2 bis 3 mm stromaufwärts der wenigstens einen Spinndüse angeordnet ist.

15 50. Vorrichtung gemäß Anspruch 49, worin die wenigstens eine beheizte, mit Löchern versehene Scheibe ca. 2,5 mm stromaufwärts der wenigstens einen Spinndüse angeordnet ist.

51. Vorrichtung gemäß einem der Ansprüche 43 bis 50, worin die wenigstens eine beheizte, mit Löchern versehene Scheibe und die wenigstens eine Spinndüse eine entsprechende Anzahl von Kapillaren und ein entsprechendes Muster umfassen.

20 52. Vorrichtung gemäß einem der Ansprüche 43 bis 51, worin die Kapillaren in der wenigstens einen beheizten, mit Löchern versehenen Scheibe eine Querschnittsfläche umfassen, die bis zu ca. 30 % größer ist als die Querschnittsfläche der Kapillaren in der wenigstens einen Spinndüse.

25 53. Vorrichtung gemäß einem der Ansprüche 37 bis 52, worin die wenigstens eine Spinndüse 500 bis 150 000 Kapillaren mit eingelassenen, angesenkten oder eingelassenen und angesenkten Kapillaren umfaßt, gegebenenfalls einschließlich einer unteren Vertiefung.

30 54. Vorrichtung gemäß einem der Ansprüche 37 bis 53, worin die Mittel zum Abschrecken Mittel zum radialen Abschrecken umfassen.

55. Vorrichtung gemäß einem der Ansprüche 37 bis 54, worin die Mittel zum Abschrecken Mittel zum Blasen eines oxidativen Gases durch die wenigstens eine Düse umfassen.

35 56. Vorrichtung gemäß Anspruch 54, worin die Mittel zum radialen Abschrecken Mittel zum Bewirken eines Flusses eines oxidativen Gases mit einer Fließgeschwindigkeit von ca. 3 000 bis 12 000 ft/min (900 bis 3 600 m/min) umfassen.

40 57. Vorrichtung gemäß einem der Ansprüche 37 bis 56, die ein zusätzliches Mittel zum Erwärmen der Polymerzusammensetzung auf eine Temperatur von ca. 200 bis 300°C einschließt, bevor die Polymerzusammensetzung die Mittel zum Erwärmen erreicht.

45 58. Vorrichtung gemäß einem der Ansprüche 37 bis 57, worin die Mittel zum Erwärmen Elemente zum Erwärmen durch wenigstens eines aus Erwärmen durch Leitung, Konvektion, Hochfrequenz, magnetisches und Strahlung umfassen.

50 59. Vorrichtung gemäß einem der Ansprüche 37 bis 58, worin die Mittel zur Zufuhr einer Polymerzusammensetzung zur wenigstens einen Spinndüse zum Erhalt einer Spinngeschwindigkeit von ca. 10 bis 200 m/min durch die wenigstens eine Spinndüse fähig sind.

55 60. Vorrichtung gemäß Anspruch 59, worin die Mittel zur Zufuhr einer Polymerzusammensetzung zur wenigstens einen Spinndüse zum Erhalt einer Spinngeschwindigkeit von ca. 80 bis 100 m/min durch die wenigstens eine Spinndüse fähig sind.

61. Faser oder Filament, umfassend:

5 einen inneren Kern aus Polymermaterial;

wobei das durch oxidative Kettenbspaltung abgebaute Polymermaterial im wesentlichen auf die Oberflächenzone beschränkt ist, worin der innere Kern und die Oberflächenzone angrenzende diskrete Teile der Kern-Mantel-Struktur umfassen; und

10 wobei das durch oxidative Kettenbspaltung abgebaute Polymermaterial im wesentlichen auf die Oberflächenzone beschränkt ist, worin der innere Kern und die Oberflächenzone angrenzende diskrete Teile der Kern-Mantel-Struktur umfassen,

15 worin das Polymermaterial ein Polyolefin umfaßt.

62. Faser oder Filament, umfassend:

20 einen inneren Kern aus Polymermaterial;

25 eine Oberflächenzone mit einer Dicke von wenigstens ca. 0,5 µm, die den inneren Kern umgibt, wobei die Oberflächenzone eine Konzentration an durch oxidative Kettenbspaltung abgebautem Polymermaterial umfaßt, so daß der innere Kern und die Oberflächenzone eine Kern-Mantel-Struktur umfassen; und

30 wobei das durch oxidative Kettenbspaltung abgebaute Polymermaterial im wesentlichen auf die Oberflächenzone beschränkt ist, worin der innere Kern und die Oberflächenzone angrenzende diskrete Teile der Kern-Mantel-Struktur umfassen,

35 worin das Polymermaterial ein Polyolefin umfaßt.

63. Faser oder filtriert, umfassend:

40 einen inneren Kern aus Polymermaterial;

45 eine Oberflächenzone, die den inneren Kern umgibt, wobei die Oberflächenzone eine hohe Konzentration an durch oxidative Kettenbspaltung abgebautem Polymermaterial umfaßt, so daß der innere Kern und die Oberflächenzone eine Kern-Mantel-Struktur umfassen; und

50 wobei der innere Kern eine Schmelzflußrate besitzt, die im wesentlichen gleich einer durchschnittlichen Schmelzflußrate des inneren Kerns und der Oberflächenzone ist,

worin das Polymermaterial ein Polyolefin umfaßt.

40 **64. Faser oder Filament gemäß Anspruch 61, 62 oder 63, worin das Polymermaterial wenigstens eines aus Polyethylen oder Polypropylen umfaßt.**

45 **65. Faser oder Filament gemäß Anspruch 64, worin das Polymermaterial im inneren Kern und der Oberflächenzone Polypropylen umfaßt.**

50 **66. Faser oder Filament gemäß Anspruch 65, worin der innere Kern eine Schmelzflußrate von ca. 10 besitzt und die durchschnittliche Schmelzflußrate ca. 11 beträgt.**

55 **67. Faser oder Filament gemäß einem der Ansprüche 61 bis 66, worin die Oberflächenzone eine Dicke von wenigstens ca. 1 µm besitzt.**

68. Vliesmaterial, umfassend Fasern gemäß einem der Ansprüche 61 bis 67, die thermisch miteinander bondiert sind.

55 **69. Hygieneprodukt, umfassend wenigstens eine Absorptionsmittelschicht und wenigstens ein Vliesgewebe, umfassend Fasern gemäß einem der Ansprüche 61 bis 67, die thermisch miteinander bondiert sind.**

70. Hygieneprodukt gemäß Anspruch 69, umfassend eine Windel, die eine äußere undurchlässige Schicht, eine innere Vliesgewebeschicht und eine Absorptionsmittelzwischenschicht umfaßt.

Revendications

1. Procédé pour filer des filaments de polymère, comprenant les étapes consistant à :
 - 5 distribuer une composition de polymère à au moins une filière, ladite composition de polymère comprenant une polyoléfine ;
 - chauffer la composition de polymère à un emplacement à, ou adjacent à, l'au moins une filière afin d'obtenir un chauffage suffisant de la composition de polymère pour dégrader partiellement la composition de polymère au voisinage de l'au moins une filière ;
 - 10 extruder la composition de polymère partiellement dégradée à travers l'au moins une filière pour former des filaments fondus ; et
 - refroidir immédiatement les filaments fondus dans une atmosphère oxydante, lorsque les filaments fondus sont extrudés, pour provoquer une dégradation par scission de chaîne par oxydation d'au moins une surface des filaments fondus afin d'obtenir des filaments ayant une structure âme-gaine.
- 15 2. Procédé pour filer des filaments de polymère, comprenant les étapes consistant à :
 - distribuer une composition de polymère à au moins une filière, ladite composition de polymère comprenant une polyoléfine ;
 - 20 chauffer la composition de polymère à un emplacement à, ou adjacent à, l'au moins une filière afin de chauffer la composition de polymère à une température suffisante pour obtenir une structure âme-gaine de filaments lors d'un refroidissement dans une atmosphère oxydante ;
 - extruder la composition de polymère chauffée à travers l'au moins une filière pour former des filaments fondus ; et
 - 25 refroidir les filaments fondus dans une atmosphère oxydante, lorsque les filaments fondus sont extrudés, pour provoquer une dégradation par scission de chaîne par oxydation d'au moins une surface des filaments fondus afin d'obtenir des filaments ayant une structure âme-gaine.
3. Procédé selon la revendication 1 ou 2, dans lequel le chauffage de la composition de polymère comprend un chauffage jusqu'à une température d'au moins environ 200°C.
4. Procédé selon la revendication 3, dans lequel le chauffage de la composition de polymère comprend un chauffage jusqu'à une température d'au moins environ 220°C.
- 35 5. Procédé selon la revendication 4, dans lequel le chauffage de la composition de polymère comprend un chauffage jusqu'à une température d'au moins environ 250°C.
6. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 3 à 5, dans lequel l'extrusion comprend une extrusion de la composition de polymère chauffée ayant une température d'au moins environ 200°C.
- 40 7. Procédé selon la revendication 6, dans lequel l'extrusion comprend une extrusion de la composition de polymère chauffée ayant une température d'au moins environ 220°C.
8. Procédé selon la revendication 7, dans lequel l'extrusion comprend une extrusion de la composition de polymère chauffée ayant une température d'au moins environ 250°C.
- 45 9. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 2 à 8, dans lequel les filaments fondus sont immédiatement refroidis.
- 50 10. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 2 à 9, dans lequel le chauffage comprend un chauffage de l'au moins une filière.
11. Procédé selon la revendication 10, dans lequel le chauffage comprend un chauffage direct de l'au moins une filière.
- 55 12. Procédé selon la revendication 11, dans lequel l'au moins une filière est chauffée à une température d'au moins environ 230°C.
13. Procédé selon la revendication 12, dans lequel l'au moins une filière est chauffée à une température d'au moins

environ 250°C.

14. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 2 à 9, dans lequel le chauffage comprend un positionnement d'au moins un élément à ouvertures chauffé en amont de l'au moins une filière.
5
15. Procédé selon la revendication 14, dans lequel l'au moins un élément à ouvertures comprend au moins une plaque à ouvertures.
16. Procédé selon la revendication 15, dans lequel l'au moins une plaque à ouvertures chauffée est chauffée à une
10 température d'au moins environ 250°C.
17. Procédé selon la revendication 16, dans lequel l'au moins une plaque à ouvertures est positionnée à environ 1 à 4 mm en amont de l'au moins une filière.
- 15 18. Procédé selon la revendication 17, dans lequel l'au moins un élément à ouvertures est positionné à environ 2 à 3 mm en amont de l'au moins une filière.
20
19. Procédé selon la revendication 18, dans lequel l'au moins un élément à ouvertures est positionné à environ 2,5 mm en amont de l'au moins une filière.
- 20 20. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 15 à 19, dans lequel l'au moins une plaque à ouvertures et l'au moins une filière comprennent un nombre correspondant de capillaires et une configuration correspondante.
- 25 21. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 15 à 19, dans lequel les capillaires dans l'au moins une plaque à ouvertures ont une section transversale qui est jusqu'à environ 30 % plus grande qu'une section transversale des capillaires dans l'au moins une filière.
22. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 21, dans lequel l'au moins une filière comprend 500 à 150 000 capillaires comprenant des capillaires chanfreinés, fraisés, ou fraisés et chanfreinés, comprenant éventuellement un évidement inférieur.
30
23. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 22, dans lequel le refroidissement comprend un refroidissement radial.
- 35 24. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 22, dans lequel le refroidissement consiste à souffler un gaz oxydant à travers au moins une tuyère.
- 25 25. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 23 ou 24, dans lequel le refroidissement radial comprend un gaz oxydant ayant une vitesse d'écoulement d'environ 900 à 3600 m/min (3000 à 12 000 ft/min).
40
26. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 25, dans lequel le chauffage comprend au moins un chauffage par conduction, convection, induction, rayonnement et chauffage magnétique.
- 45 27. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 26, dans lequel la vitesse de filage est d'environ 10 à 200 mètres par minute.
28. Procédé selon la revendication 27, dans lequel la vitesse de filage est d'environ 80 à 100 mètres par minute.
- 50 29. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 28, dans lequel la composition de polymère comprend une composition de polypropylène.
30. Procédé selon la revendication 29, dans lequel la composition de polypropylène a un débit en fusion d'environ 0,5 à 40 dg/min.
- 55 31. Procédé selon la revendication 29, dans lequel la composition de polypropylène a une large distribution de poids moléculaire.
32. Procédé selon la revendication 31, dans lequel la distribution de poids moléculaire de la composition de polypro-

pylène est au moins d'environ 4,5.

33. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 32, dans lequel la composition de polymère comprend au moins un agent qui diminue la température de fusion de surface des matériaux de polymère.

5 34. Procédé selon la revendication 33, dans lequel l'au moins un agent qui diminue la température de fusion de surface des matériaux de polymère comprend au moins un carboxylate de métal.

10 35. Procédé selon la revendication 34, dans lequel l'au moins un carboxylate de métal comprend au moins un élément sélectionné dans le groupe consistant en sels de nickel d'acides 2-éthylhexanoïque, octylique, décanoïque et dodécanoïque, et 2-éthylhexanoates de Fe, Co, Ca et Ba.

15 36. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 35, dans lequel les filaments fondus sont refroidis dans une atmosphère oxydante pour provoquer une dégradation par scission de chaîne par oxydation d'au moins une surface des filaments fondus afin d'obtenir des filaments ayant une structure âme-gaine capable de former des matériaux non-tissés ayant une résistance en sens transversal d'au moins 12,5 N/5 cm (650 g/in) pour une étoffe de 24 g/m² (20 g/yd²) liée à des vitesses d'au moins 76 m/min (250 ft/min).

20 37. Appareil pour filer des filaments de polymère, comprenant :

au moins une filière ;
un moyen pour distribuer une composition de polymère à travers ladite au moins une filière pour extruder des filaments fondus ;
un moyen pour chauffer sensiblement uniformément la composition de polymère à un emplacement à, ou adjacent à, ladite au moins une filière afin d'obtenir un chauffage suffisant de la composition de polymère pour dégrader partiellement la composition de polymère au voisinage de ladite au moins une filière ; et
un moyen pour refroidir immédiatement les filaments fondus de polymère extrudé dans une atmosphère oxydante, lorsque les filaments fondus quittent ladite au moins une filière, afin de provoquer une dégradation par scission de chaîne par oxydation d'au moins une surface des filaments fondus,
dans lequel

(i) ledit moyen de chauffage comprend au moins un élément à ouvertures positionné en amont de ladite au moins une filière, et/ou
(ii) au moins une filière est prévue qui est chauffée sensiblement uniformément par résistance ou impédance directe de ladite filière, et/ou
(iii) le moyen pour distribuer le polymère à travers la filière est capable de produire une vitesse de filage d'environ 10 à 200 mètres par minute.

38. Appareil pour filer des filaments de polymère, comprenant :

40 au moins une filière ;
un moyen pour distribuer une composition de polymère à travers ladite au moins une filière pour extruder des filaments fondus ;
un moyen pour chauffer la composition de polymère à un emplacement à, ou adjacent à, ladite au moins une filière afin d'obtenir un chauffage suffisant de la composition de polymère pour obtenir une structure âme-gaine de filaments lors d'un refroidissement dans une atmosphère oxydante ; et
un moyen pour refroidir les filaments fondus de polymère extrudé dans une atmosphère oxydante, lorsque les filaments quittent ladite au moins une filière, pour provoquer une dégradation par scission de chaîne par oxydation d'au moins une surface des filaments fondus afin d'obtenir des filaments ayant une structure âme-gaine, dans lequel

45 (i) ledit moyen de chauffage comprend au moins un élément à ouvertures positionné en amont de ladite au moins une filière, et/ou
(ii) au moins une filière est prévue qui est chauffée sensiblement uniformément par résistance ou impédance directe de ladite filière, et/ou
(iii) le moyen pour distribuer le polymère à travers la filière est capable de produire une vitesse de filage d'environ 10 à 200 mètres par minute.

39. Appareil selon la revendication 38, qui comprend un moyen pour refroidir immédiatement les filaments fondus lorsqu'ils quittent ladite filière.

5 40. Appareil selon l'une quelconque des revendications 37 à 39, dans lequel ledit moyen de chauffage comprend des éléments pour chauffer sensiblement uniformément ladite au moins une filière jusqu'à une température d'au moins environ 230°C.

10 41. Appareil selon la revendication 40, dans lequel ledit moyen de chauffage comprend des éléments pour chauffer sensiblement uniformément ladite au moins une filière jusqu'à une température d'au moins environ 250°C.

15 42. Appareil selon la revendication 40, dans lequel ledit moyen de chauffage comprend des éléments pour chauffer sensiblement uniformément ladite au moins une filière jusqu'à une température d'environ 230°C à 370°C.

43. Appareil selon l'une quelconque des revendications 37 à 39, dans lequel ledit moyen de chauffage comprend au moins une plaque à ouvertures chauffée positionnée en amont de ladite au moins une filière.

20 44. Appareil selon la revendication 43, dans lequel ledit moyen de chauffage comprend des éléments pour chauffer ladite au moins une plaque à ouvertures chauffée jusqu'à une température d'au moins environ 250°C.

45. Appareil selon la revendication 44, dans lequel ledit moyen de chauffage comprend des éléments pour chauffer ladite au moins une plaque à ouvertures chauffée jusqu'à une température d'environ 250°C à 370°C.

25 46. Appareil selon la revendication 45, dans lequel ledit moyen de chauffage comprend des éléments pour chauffer ladite au moins une plaque à ouvertures chauffée jusqu'à une température d'environ 280°C à 350°C.

47. Appareil selon la revendication 46, dans lequel ledit moyen de chauffage comprend des éléments pour chauffer ladite au moins une plaque à ouvertures chauffée jusqu'à une température d'environ 300°C à 350°C.

30 48. Appareil selon l'une quelconque des revendications 43 à 47, dans lequel ladite au moins une plaque à ouvertures chauffée est positionnée à environ 1 à 4 mm en amont de ladite au moins une filière.

49. Appareil selon la revendication 48, dans lequel ladite au moins une plaque à ouvertures chauffée est positionnée à environ 2 à 3 mm en amont de ladite au moins une filière.

50. Appareil selon la revendication 49, dans lequel ladite au moins une plaque à ouvertures chauffée est positionnée à environ 2,5 mm en amont de ladite au moins une filière.

51. Appareil selon l'une quelconque des revendications 43 à 50, dans lequel ladite au moins une plaque à ouvertures chauffée et ladite au moins une filière comprennent un nombre correspondant de capillaires et une configuration correspondante.

52. Appareil selon l'une quelconque des revendications 43 à 51, dans lequel les capillaires dans ladite au moins une plaque à ouvertures chauffée ont une section transversale qui est jusqu'à environ 30 % plus grande qu'une section transversale des capillaires dans ladite au moins une filière.

53. Appareil selon l'une quelconque des revendications 37 à 52, dans lequel l'au moins une filière comprend 500 à 150 000 capillaires comprenant des capillaires chanfreinés, fraisés, ou fraisés et chanfreinés, comprenant éventuellement un évidemment inférieur.

54. Appareil selon l'une quelconque des revendications 37 à 53, dans lequel ledit moyen de refroidissement comprend un moyen pour un refroidissement radial.

55. Appareil selon l'une quelconque des revendications 37 à 54, dans lequel ledit moyen de refroidissement comprend un moyen pour souffler un gaz oxydant à travers au moins une tuyère.

56. Appareil selon la revendication 54, dans lequel ledit moyen de refroidissement radial comprend un moyen pour produire un flux d'un gaz oxydant à une vitesse d'écoulement d'environ 900 à 3600 m/min (3000 à 12 000 ft/min).

57. Appareil selon l'une quelconque des revendications 37 à 56, comprenant un moyen supplémentaire pour chauffer la composition de polymère jusqu'à une température d'environ 200°C à 300°C avant que la composition de polymère atteigne ledit moyen de chauffage.

5 58. Appareil selon l'une quelconque des revendications 37 à 57, dans lequel ledit moyen de chauffage comprend des éléments pour chauffer par au moins un chauffage par conduction, convection, induction, rayonnement et chauffage magnétique.

10 59. Appareil selon l'une quelconque des revendications 37 à 58, dans lequel ledit moyen pour distribuer une composition de polymère à ladite au moins une filière est capable de produire une vitesse de filage d'environ 10 à 200 mètres par minute à travers ladite au moins une filière.

15 60. Appareil selon la revendication 59, dans lequel ledit moyen pour distribuer une composition de polymère à ladite au moins une filière est capable de produire une vitesse de filage d'environ 80 à 100 mètres par minute à travers ladite au moins une filière.

61. Fibre ou filament, comprenant :

20 une âme interne de matériau polymère ;
une zone de surface entourant ladite âme interne, ladite zone de surface comprenant une concentration de matériau polymère dégradé par scission de chaîne par oxydation, de manière que ladite âme interne et ladite zone de surface comprennent une structure âme-gaine ; et
ledit matériau polymère dégradé par scission de chaîne par oxydation étant sensiblement limité à ladite zone de surface, où ladite âme interne et ladite zone de surface comprennent des portions discontinues adjacentes de ladite structure âme-gaine,
25 où le matériau polymère comprend une polyoléfine.

62. Fibre ou filament, comprenant :

30 une âme interne de matériau polymère ;
une zone de surface ayant une épaisseur d'au moins environ 0,5 μ entourant ladite âme interne, ladite zone de surface comprenant une concentration de matériau polymère dégradé par scission de chaîne par oxydation, de manière que ladite âme interne et ladite zone de surface comprennent une structure âme-gaine ; et
ledit matériau polymère dégradé par scission de chaîne par oxydation étant sensiblement limité à ladite zone de surface, où ladite âme interne et ladite zone de surface comprennent des portions discontinues adjacentes de ladite structure âme-gaine,
35 où le matériau polymère comprend une polyoléfine.

63. Fibre ou filament, comprenant :

40 une âme interne de matériau polymère ;
une zone de surface entourant ladite âme interne, ladite zone de surface comprenant une forte concentration de matériau polymère dégradé par scission de chaîne par oxydation, de manière que ladite âme interne et ladite zone de surface comprennent une structure âme-gaine ; et
45 ladite âme interne a un débit en fusion sensiblement égal à un débit en fusion moyen de ladite âme interne et ladite zone de surface,
où le matériau polymère comprend une polyoléfine.

64. Fibre ou filament selon la revendication 61, 62 ou 63, dans lequel ledit matériau polymère comprend au moins un polyéthylène ou un polypropylène.

50 65. Fibre ou filament selon la revendication 64, dans lequel ledit matériau polymère dans ladite âme interne et ladite zone de surface comprend un polypropylène.

55 66. Fibre ou filament selon la revendication 65, dans lequel ladite âme interne a un débit en fusion d'environ 10, et ledit débit en fusion moyen est d'environ 11.

67. Fibre ou filament selon l'une quelconque des revendications 61 à 66, dans lequel ladite zone de surface a une

épaisseur d'au moins environ 1 µm.

68. Matériau non-tissé comprenant des fibres selon l'une quelconque des revendications 61 à 67 liées thermiquement les unes aux autres.

5 69. Produit hygiénique comprenant au moins une couche absorbante, et au moins une étoffe non-tissée comprenant des fibres selon l'une quelconque des revendications 61 à 67 liées thermiquement les unes aux autres.

10 70. Produit hygiénique selon la revendication 69, comprenant une couche pour bébé comprenant une couche imperméable externe, une couche d'étoffe non-tissée interne, et une couche absorbante intermédiaire.

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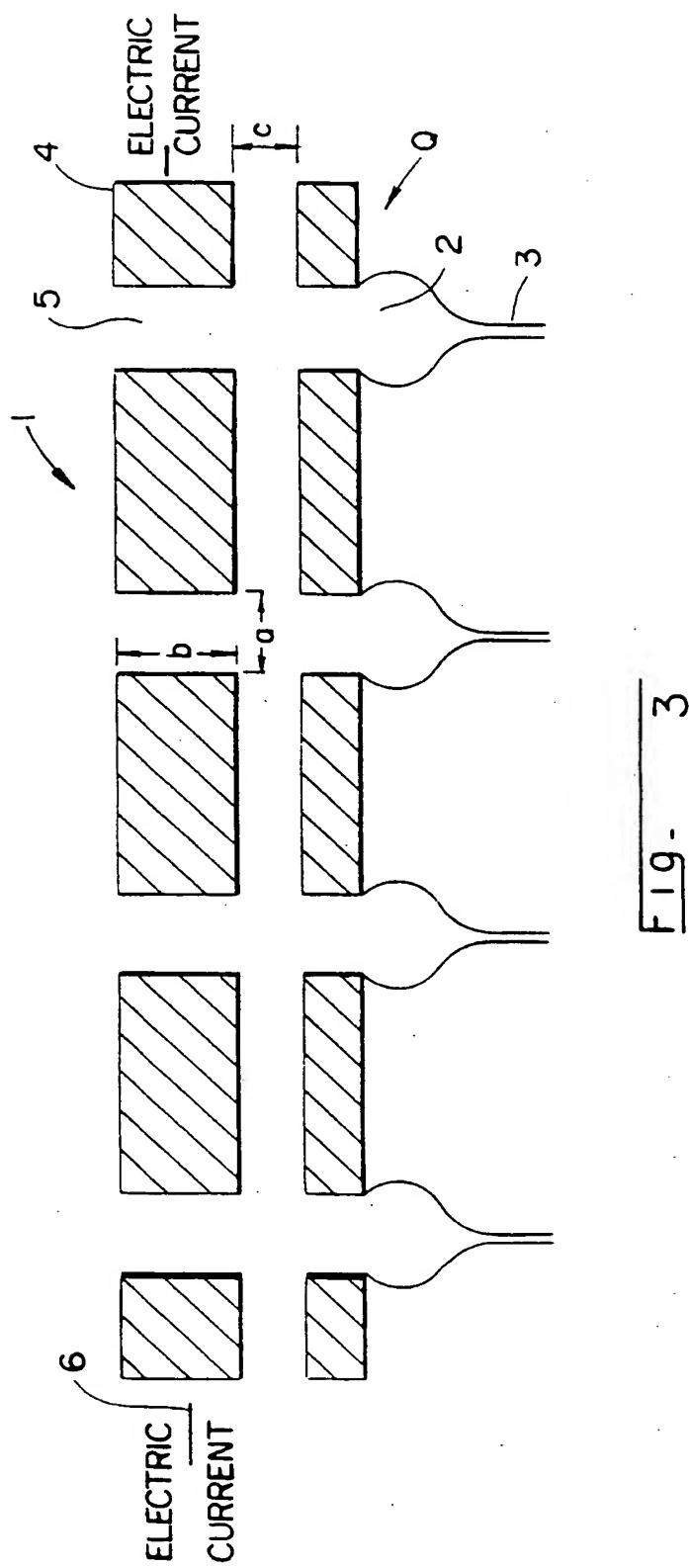
5,000 X
1.0 μ m

Fig - 1



Fig - 2

5,000 \times
1.0 μm



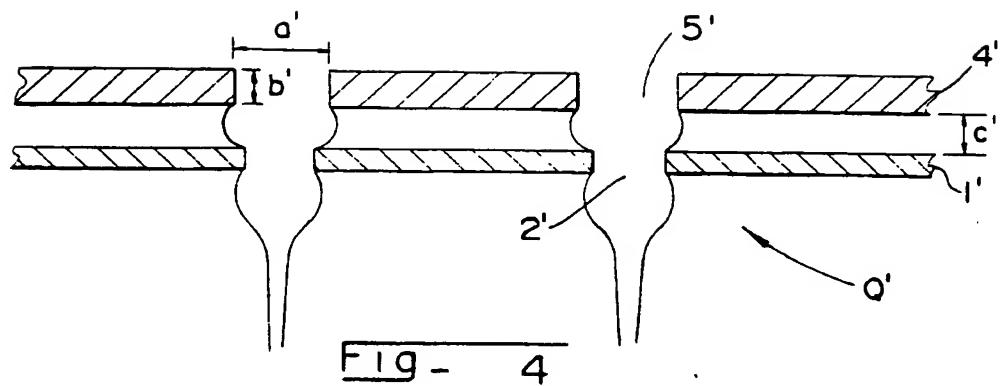


Fig - 4

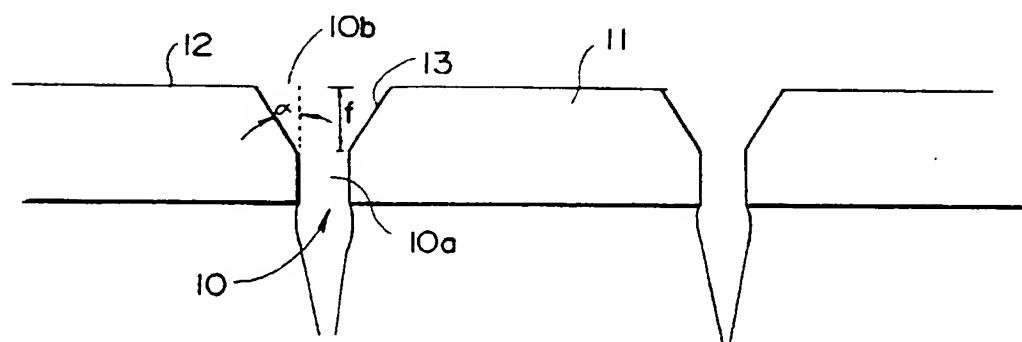


Fig - 6

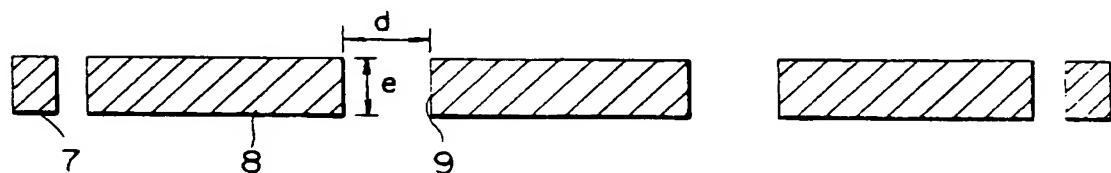


Fig - 5

Fig - 8

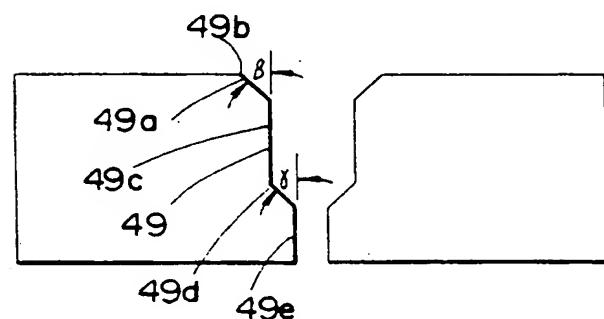
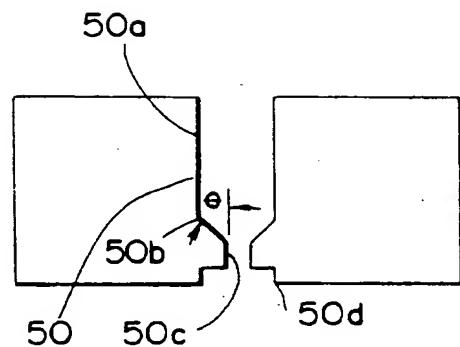
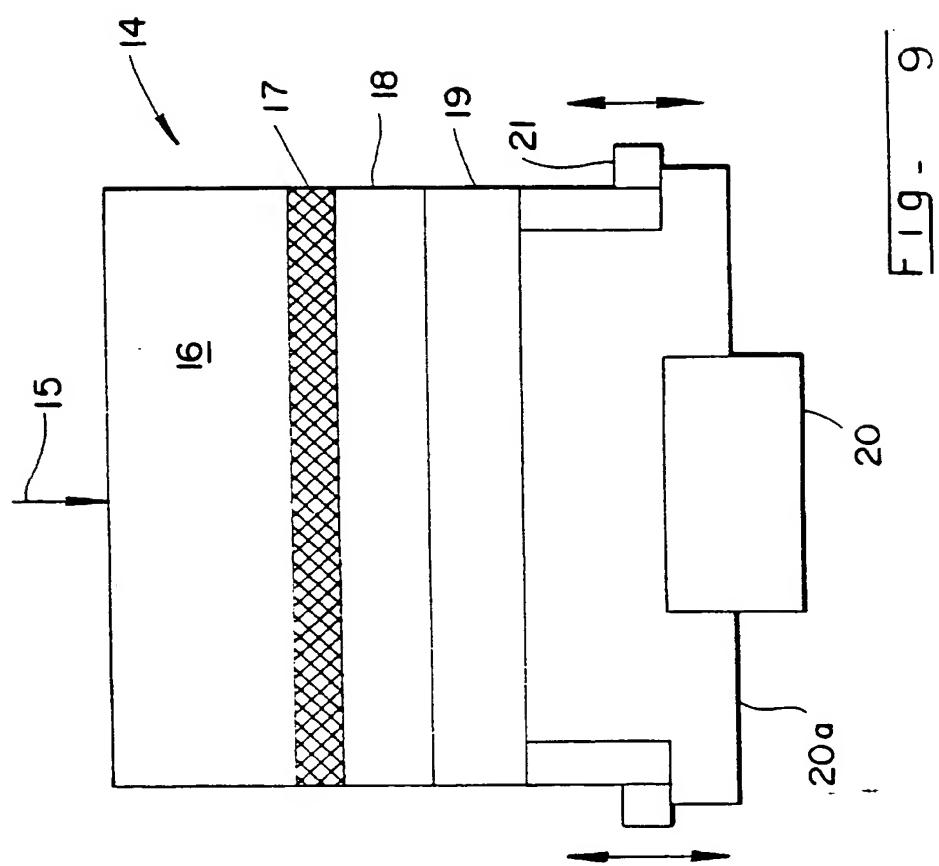


Fig - 7



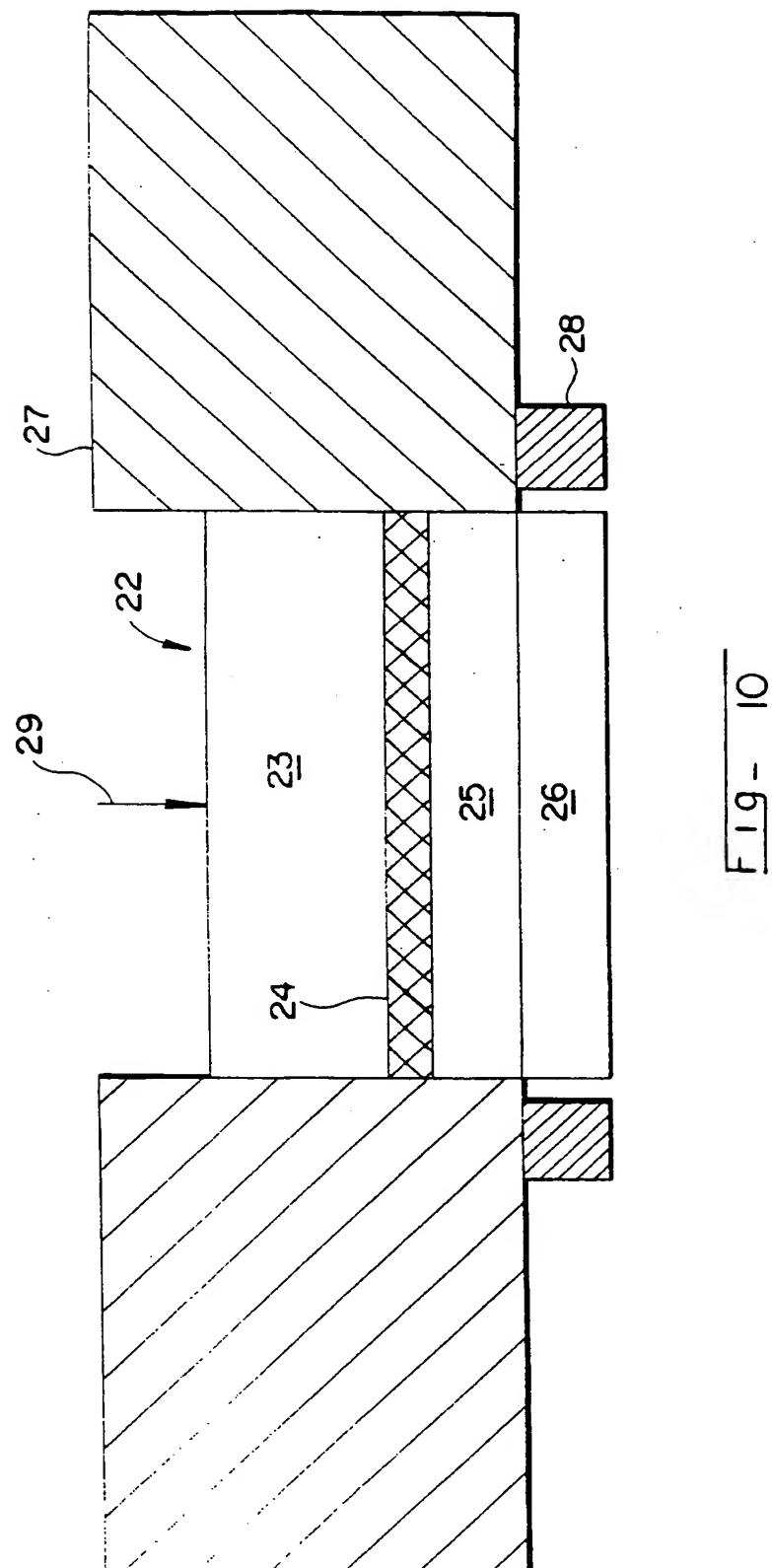


Fig- 11

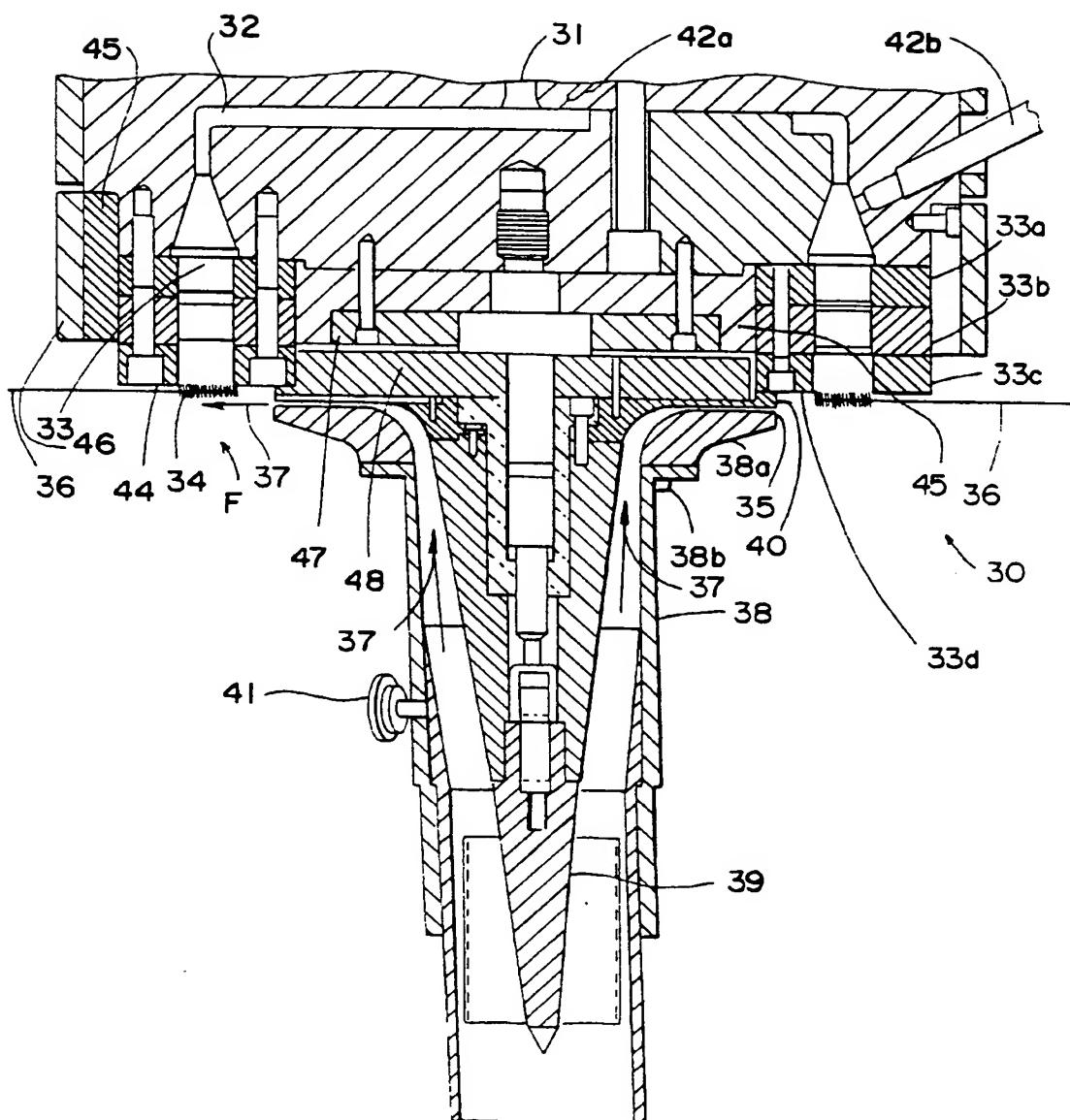
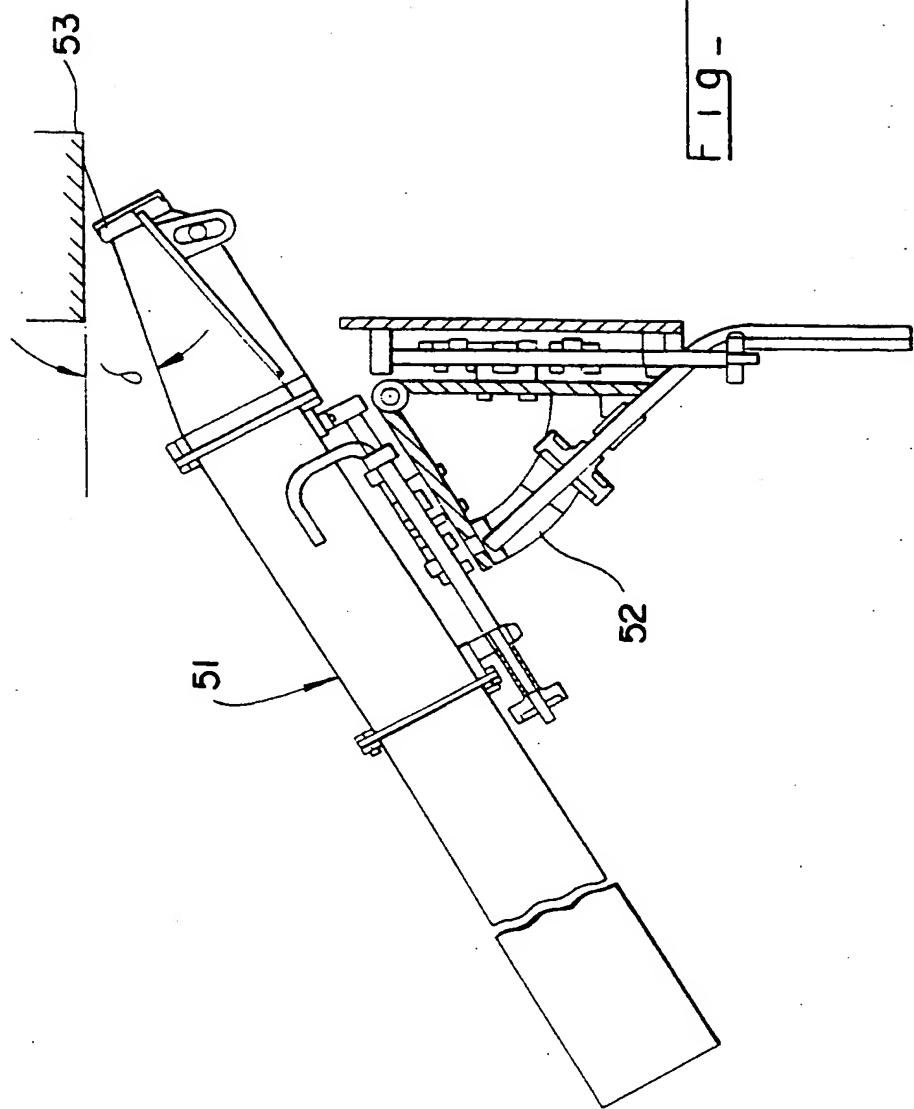


Fig - 12



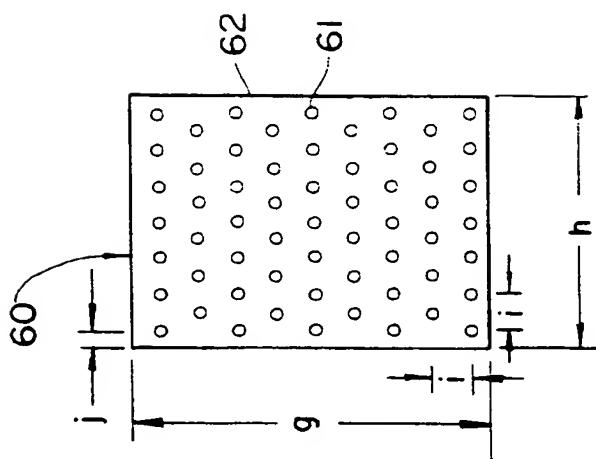


Fig. 13a

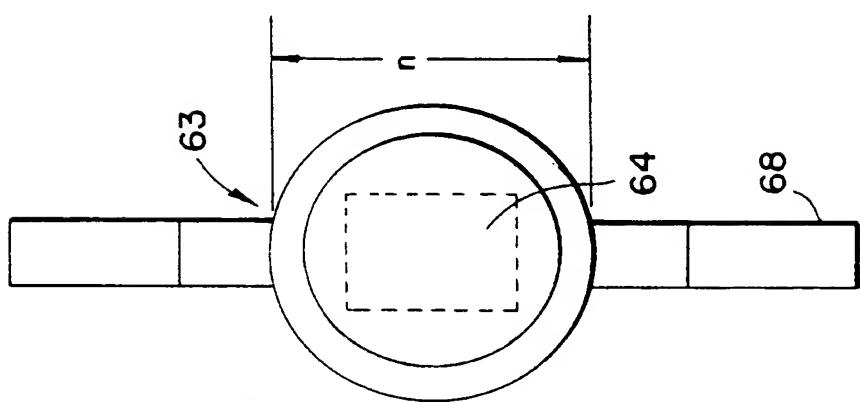


Fig. 13d

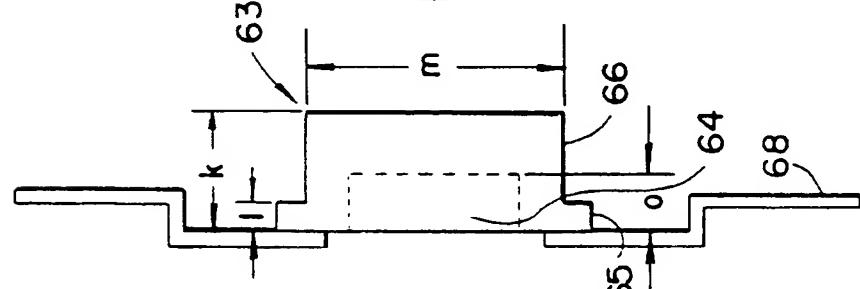
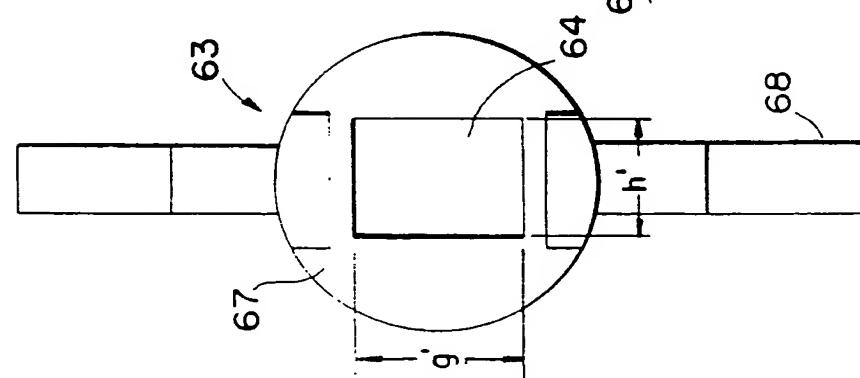


Fig. 13c



F-19-173b

FIG - 14

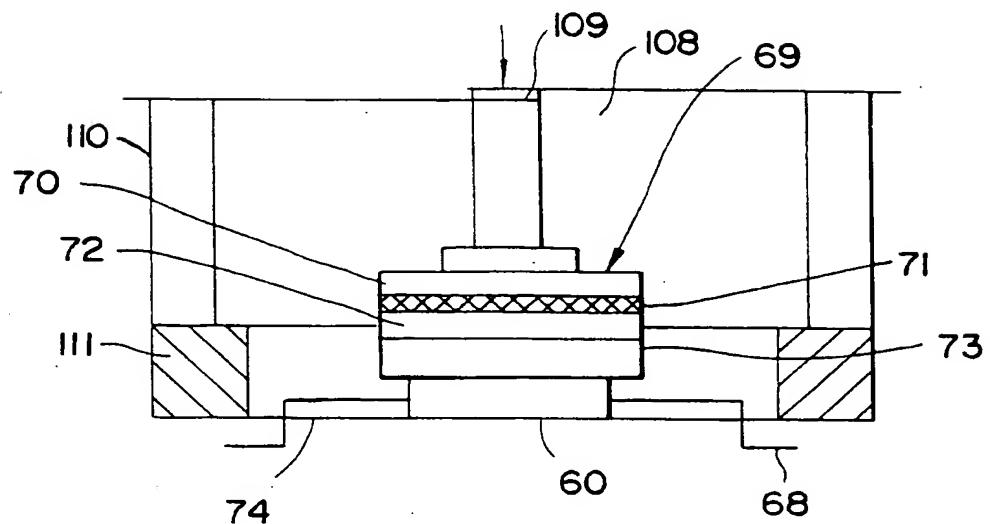
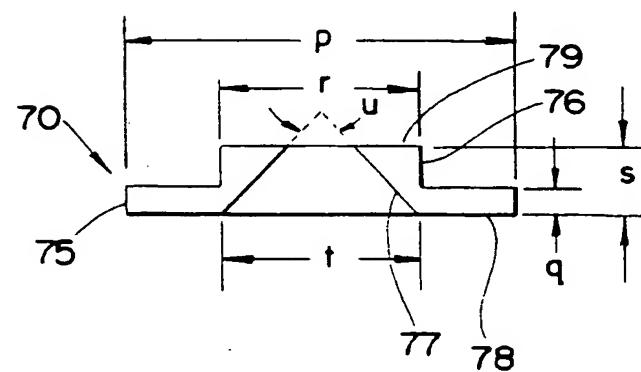


FIG - 15



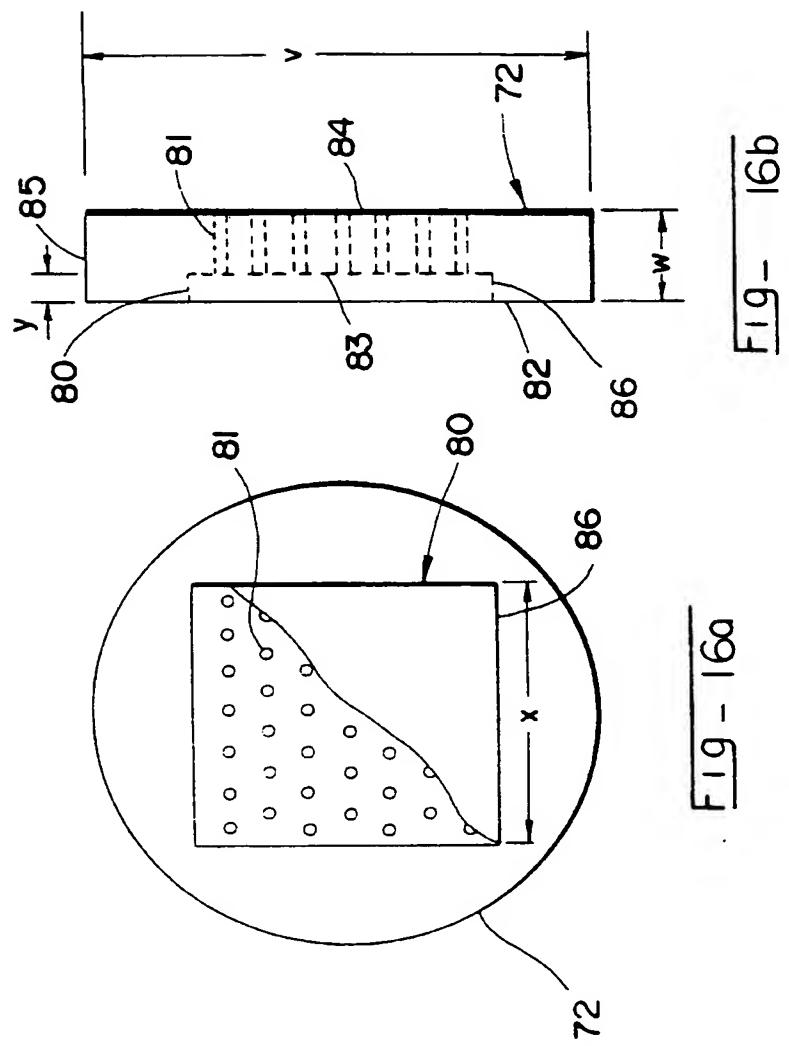


FIG - 17

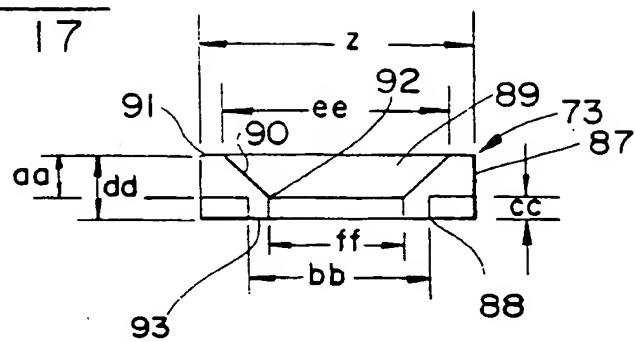


FIG - 18a

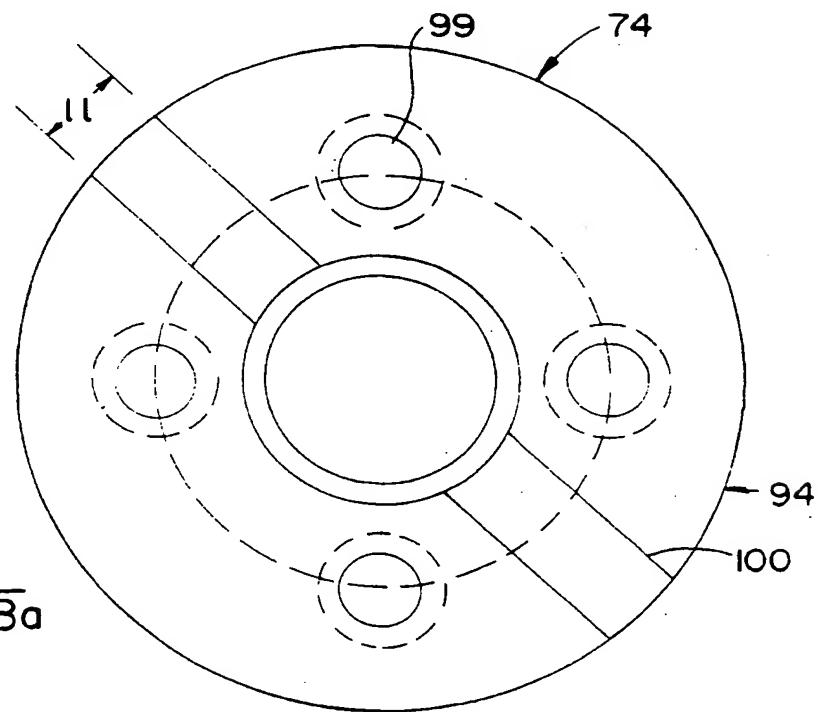
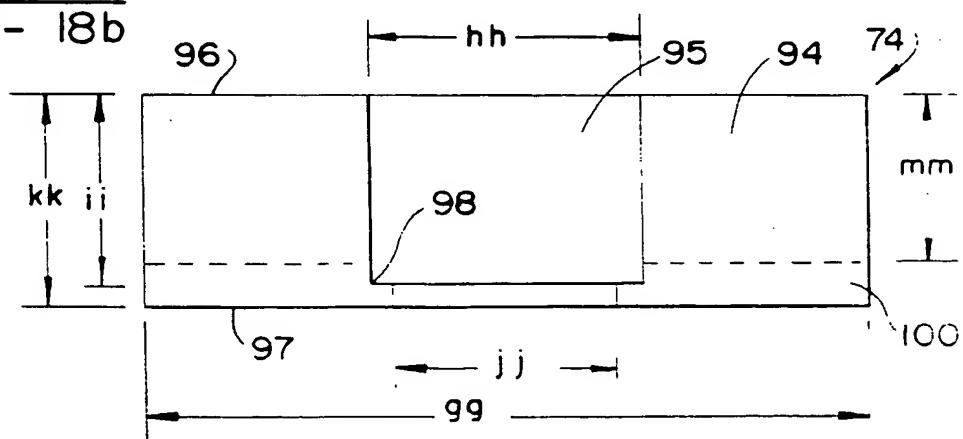
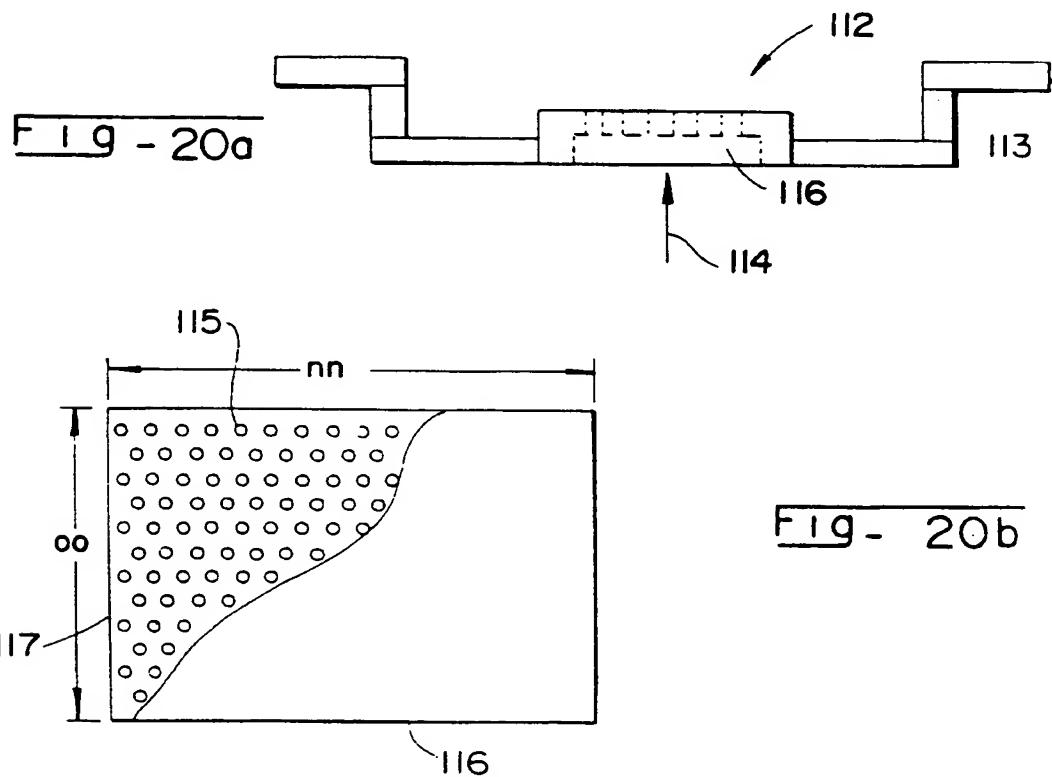
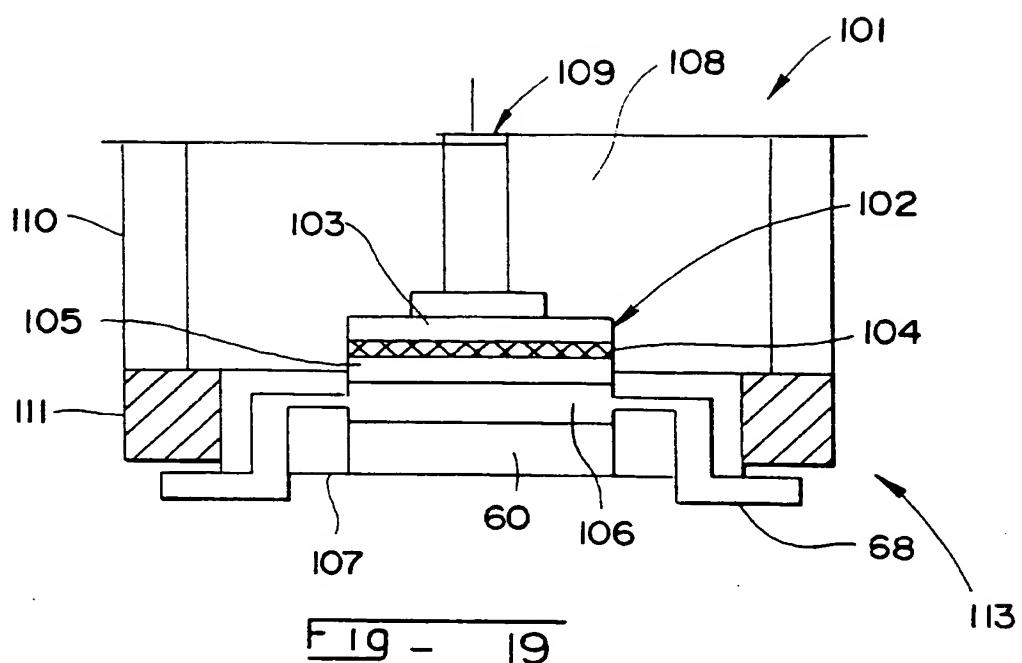


FIG - 18b





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